

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

North Hunterdon/Voorhees Regional High School District

Hunterdon County

Monitoring Dates: November 15-16, 2001

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Background Information

During the 2000-2001 school year, the North Hunterdon/Voorhees 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 North Hunterdon/Voorhees 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 North Hunterdon/Voorhees 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 November 7, 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.

District Strengths:

The district should be commended for its commitment to the provision of inclusive programs that includes a variety of in-class support options for students.

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District staff have consistently stated that when a student wants or needs a specific program or course, the district ensures it makes it available.

The district has a Community Based Instruction Program that serves high school students with significant learning needs. The program is designed to provide typical life experiences. The objectives of the program are to provide students with the skills necessary to carry out typical life routines in the community, to assist the students with learning related functional skills and to provide the student with the skills necessary for transition from school life into adult life.

Additionally, the Community Based Instruction Program addresses the Core Curriculum Standards in six content areas: Visual and Performing Arts, Comprehensive and Physical Education, Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies as well as all five cross-content Workplace Readiness Standards.

The North Hunterdon/Voorhees Regional High School District has a school wide voicemail, e-mail and website that allows parent-to-staff communication and teacher-to-teacher communication.

Area Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Programs and Services was determined to be an area of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the NJDOE team 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 Policy and Procedures and public information. The required Statement of Assurances and procedures have been submitted to the county office

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding in-service training activities. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these procedures.

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

Section II: F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, length of day, facilities and certification of staff.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding transfer students. 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 the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the development of goals and objectives for related services.

Area of Need:

Goals and objectives for Related Service - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not develop goals and objectives for related services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that goals and objectives for related services are developed and incorporated into IEPs. The improvement plan must include an 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 consent, independent evaluations and meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the selection and training of surrogate parents. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures to bring about required changes. The plan must be revised to include these procedures.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding notices.

Area of Need:

Notices - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that although parents attend meetings, a review of files indicated that the district does not document the provision of notices of a meeting to parents. Additionally, a review of notices indicated they do not contain the required components.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district documents the provision of notices to parents and/or adult students. The plan must further ensure all notices contain the required components. It is recommended that the district use the notices developed by the NJDOE, Office of Special Education Programs.**

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Section IV: Location, Referral & Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the referral process.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the health summary, the need to document vision and hearing screenings and referral issues. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding child find.

Area of Need:

Child Find - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that child find activities are not sufficient to identify students who are potentially disabled because they are not conducted throughout the school year.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that child find activities are conducted throughout the year, including summer months, to locate and refer potentially disabled students in grades 9-12, including migrant and homeless students.**

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary assessments, standardized assessments and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the need to document acceptance or rejection of evaluation report. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Area of Need:

Functional Assessment- During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that functional assessments do not contain the required components.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure functional assessments contain all components as required by N.J.A.C. 6A: 14-3.4(d)2. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Written Reports - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not develop written reports for all assessments that are conducted. Additionally, for those reports that are written, evaluators do not date them.

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns regarding timelines, participants at planning meetings, reevaluation of incoming students, routine review of records for re-evaluations and the identification of students who need re-evaluations. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings, participants and eligibility criteria.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the need to provide parents and/or adult students with documentation of the eligibility statement and with a copy of evaluation reports. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

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

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the need to train staff on their role and responsibility in implementing IEPs, attendance of required participants at meetings, age of majority and aligning goals and objectives with the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding annual reviews, considerations and required statements, documentation of the provision of IEPs to parents and present levels of educational performance (PLEP) statements.

Area of Need:

Annual Reviews - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not conduct annual reviews in a timely manner.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that annual reviews are completed at least annually. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Considerations and Required Statements - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that student IEPs do not contain all of the required components and statements.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that IEPs contain all of the required statements and components. It is recommended that the district use the IEP format developed by the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

Documentation of the Provision of IEPs to Parents - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not provide a copy of the IEP to parents.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that IEPs are consistently provided to parents. The plan must include a mechanism to document that provision in student records. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

PLEP Statements - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the PLEP statement does not contain the components required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7c.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure PLEP statements contain all of the required components. The improvement plan must 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 area of continuum of placement options, and non-academic and extracurricular participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding documentation of the LRE decision-making process. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the documentation of supplementary aids and services.

Area of Need:

Documentation of Supplementary Aids and Services - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the district does not document the supplementary aids and services that were considered and rejected for each student.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district documents the supplementary aids and services that were considered and rejected for each student. It is recommended that the district use the IEP format developed by the NJDOE, Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section X: Transition

Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the statement of needed transition services and transition service needs, identification of students' preferences and interests, consideration of community experiences and employment, career awareness, availability of career guidance activities, linkages with appropriate agencies or services, monitoring the implementation of transitions services and identification of the post-school liaison. The district has developed an improvement

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plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding student and agency invitations to meetings.

Area of Need:

Student and Agency Invitation - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not document the invitation to meetings to students and agencies responsible for providing and/or paying for transition services when transition services will be discussed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that student and agency invitations are documented in the student record.**

Transition to Pre-School

Transition to Pre-School is not applicable to this high school district.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, behavioral intervention plans and manifestation determinations, functional behavior assessment, and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding use of strategies to address behavioral issues. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding documentation to the case manager and procedural safeguards for students who are identified as potentially disabled.

Area of Need:

Documentation to the Case Manager - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not provide written documentation to case managers when students are removed from their program.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that case managers are notified in writing when students are removed from their program. The improvement plan must include an**

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administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.

Procedural Safeguard Issue - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not provide procedural safeguards for students who are identified as potentially disabled when they have been removed from their program.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students who are identified as potentially disabled are afforded the same procedural safeguards as disabled students when they are removed from program. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participation, approved accommodations and modifications and IEP documentation.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding alternate assessments.

Area of Need:

Alternate Assessments - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not provide alternate assessments for those students exempt from participating in statewide assessments.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that alternate assessments for students exempt from participating in statewide assessments are provided and documented in IEPs. In accordance with the August 1, 2001 memo issued by the Office of Special Education Programs, the district will ensure that those students who are eligible to participate in the alternate assessment program are identified. The district also needs to provide in-service training to staff.**

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

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

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Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding diplomas and written notice of graduation.

Area of Need:

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 home 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 home district school.**

Written Notice of Graduation - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not provide notice of graduation.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that parents and adult students are provided with written notice of graduation. The improvement plan must include a mechanism to document this provision in the student record. It is recommended that the district use the “Notices of Graduation” developed by the NJDOE, Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parent access, access sheets, and maintenance and destruction of student records.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the documentation of the location of other records.

Area of Need:

Documentation of the location of other records - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the central files do not indicate the location of additional records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the central files indicate the location of additional records maintained by the district.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the North Hunterdon/Voorhees Regional High School District on November 15-16, 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 many of the district's programs and services. Parents expressed concerns regarding communication with case managers, core courses, articulation meetings, transition and in-class support.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Programs and Services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-service training activities, transfer students, surrogate parents, health summary and vision and hearing screenings, referral dates, acceptance/rejection of reports, timelines and participants at planning meetings, reevaluation of incoming students, review of records, identification of students who need reevaluations, statement of eligibility and evaluation reports to parents and/or adult students, aligning IEP goals and objectives with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, implementation dates, documentation of the decision-making process, identification of the post-school liaison, statements of needed transition services and transition service needs, student interests and preferences, employment, career awareness, guidance activities, agency linkages, monitoring of outside transition services, strategies to address student conduct, manifestation determination, functional behavior assessment, and interim alternative educational settings.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding goals and objectives for related services, timelines, child find, functional assessments, written reports, annual reviews, considerations and required statements, documentation of the provision of IEPs to parents, PLEP statements, documentation of supplementary aids and services, student and agency invitations to transition meetings, documentation to case managers, procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, alternate assessments, diplomas, written notice of graduation and the documentation of the location of other records.

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