

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

District: Rumson Fair-Haven

County: Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: November 19, 2003

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Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Rumson Fair-Haven School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Rumson Fair-Haven 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 Rumson Fair-Haven 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.

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 Rumson Fair-Haven High School on October 16, 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, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrator, building principal, general education and special education teachers and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for their **Mentor Program**. The Mentor program was piloted last year to 36 students and has progressed to this year's entire freshmen class, including students with disabilities. Each freshman is assigned an adult staff member who has a mentor duty period built in to their schedule. Depending on the student's

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needs, students will meet their mentor either individually or in a group during the mentor's duty period. Currently, there are 25 staff members who have been trained. Each staff member has 10 students assigned to them. Although there is a written curriculum, the goal is for each student to be able to connect to an adult in a positive manner. Next year this program will include all 9th and 10th graders. Eventually, all students in the district will have their own mentor.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Statewide Assessment, Graduation and Procedural Safeguards 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.

Data Summary:

Data submitted by the Rumson-Fair Haven School District indicated that in 2002-2003, the district had a classification rate below the state average of 14.3%. Between 2000 and 2002, the district steadily increased the percentage of school-aged students with special needs who were educated more than 80% of the day with their non-disabled peers. These data show that when compared with the state average of 41.6%, the Rumson-Fair Haven School District's percentage of 78.6% is nearly doubled for students who are educated with their non-disabled peers. The district is to be commended for their efforts in this area. Additionally, of the special needs students who took the HSPA during school year 2001-2002, 93% scored in the proficient range in Mathematics and 66% scored proficient in Language Arts. The district is further commended for successfully achieving a 95% graduation rate during the 2001-2002 school year and a 94% graduation rate during 2002-2003.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures, parent development and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of in-service training for professional and paraprofessional staff. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because, although the district has a mechanism in place to determine staff training needs, the district lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of any training which is provided.** The inclusion of this component will allow the district to determine whether staff is utilizing the information that is being provided to them and whether students are benefiting from the provision of these training sessions. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this element.

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

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Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding adaptive physical education for students in out-of-district placements. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks a procedure to ensure that CST members who manage out-of district students discuss the types of physical education services that will be provided when students in out-of-district placements require adaptive physical education.** The inclusion of this component will ensure that students in out-of-district placements receive appropriate physical education programs in accordance with their needs.

The district further identified a concern regarding the lack of goals and objectives in IEPs for those students identified as needing counseling services. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks activities to include goals and objectives in IEPs.** The inclusion of goals and objectives will ensure the individual student's therapy needs are addressed and that the student will receive the necessary supports and interventions.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of referral process, direct referrals, summer referrals and identification timeline/participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding receipt of health/medical summaries from the school nurse for students referred to the CST. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Area(s) of Need:

Child Find Activities - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff and a review of the child find information that the district does not address migrant or homeless children.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to expand their child find activities to address children who are migrant or homeless. Implementation of these activities will ensure the district has the opportunity to identify and locate those children who may require special education services.**

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent for evaluations, bilingual evaluations and written reports signed/dated.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of appropriate assessment tools and strategies to gather information. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures to ensure that the LDT-C is aware of the most current evaluative instruments that should be utilized to appropriately assess students.** The inclusion of this component will result in an assessment tool which will more accurately assist the evaluation team in making the appropriate eligibility determination and ensure that students are appropriately assessed and placed. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.

The district further identified a concern regarding inconsistent acceptance/rejection of reports from approved clinics or agencies or professionals in private practice. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding components of functional assessments.

Area(s) of Need:

Components of Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff and review of records that evaluation reports do not include a discussion of the interventions attempted by the classroom teacher.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that functional assessments contain all required components identified in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d)2. Implementation of these activities will ensure eligibility determinations are based on all required data obtained through the assessment process. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

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Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of notices, planning meetings and parental consent.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of reevaluation timelines. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding required participants at reevaluation meetings.

Area(s) of Need:

Required Participants at Reevaluation Meetings - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through review of records that regular education teachers do not consistently attend meetings.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that all required participants attend meetings. Implementation of these activities will ensure parents have the opportunity to discuss the provision of special education programs and services within the regular education environment with the individual who will be a part of the provision of those services or who has knowledge of that general education environment. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of eligibility meeting participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of copy of evaluation reports to parents and signatures of agreement/disagreement. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the criteria for and statement of eligibility for Specific Learning Disability (SLD).

Area(s) of Need:

Statement of Eligibility for Specific Learning Disability (SLD) - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not include in the eligibility statement for SLD that “the student’s disability is not primarily a result of visual, hearing, or motor

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disabilities, general cognitive deficits, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.” Additionally, it does not include a statement regarding the presence of a severe discrepancy.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the eligibility statement for SLD includes all required information.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age of majority, implementation dates, 90-day timelines, annual review timelines and teacher responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of required participants at IEP meetings, IEP statements and considerations, annual goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, vocational representative in attendance at IEP meetings, annual review timelines and teacher responsibility in implementing students' IEPs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

The district also identified concerns in the area of changing students' schedules which then result in program and placement revisions without convening an IEP meeting. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lack activities and an administrative oversight component to ensure that all required members of the IEP team participant at these meetings.** The inclusion of this component will result in parents being afforded the opportunity to agree/disagree with the proposed changes.

Additionally, the district identified concerns in the area of IEPs not being in effect prior to start of program/services because IEPs are not typed/prepared in a timely manner. As a result, IEPs are not provided to staff who have instructional responsibility for the student. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks activities and an administrative oversight component to ensure teachers have access to IEPs prior to the implementation of the student's program.** The inclusion of this component will ensure every student receives the instructional accommodations, modifications and services required by the IEP.

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 process and present levels of performance (PLEPS).

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of least restrictive environment. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding notification to out-of-district students' participation in non-academic/extracurricular activities.

Area(s) of Need:

Notification to Out-of-District Students - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not notify students placed in out-of-district settings of non-academic/extra-curricular activities available within the district.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure out-of-district students are notified non-academic/extra-curricular activities available within the district. Implementation of these activities will ensure students have the opportunity to participate in non-academic/extra-curricular activities with their nondisabled peers. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP considerations and documentation, agency involvement and student/agency invitations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of individual interests and preferences for students ages 14 or younger. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

The district further identified a concern regarding the Statement of Needed Transition Services. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas

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

Section X: Transition to Preschool is not applicable in this regional high school district.

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Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding interim alternate educational settings, 45-day return and procedural safeguards/due process.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of written notice to the case managers, functional behavioral assessments, convening manifestation determination meetings, suspension tracking and interim alternative educational settings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of insufficient staff, consultation time, description of special class programs and documentation of group sizes for speech in the IEPs of out-of-district students'. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of services/programs to students on home instruction.

Area(s) of Need:

Home Instruction - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not ensure that home instruction services for students with disabilities begins in a timely manner and that the required number of weekly hours are provided.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure home instruction services for a student with disabilities begins in a timely manner and that the required number of weekly hours are provided in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.9(a). Implementation of these activities will ensure students on home instruction continue to receive the program and services required to allow them to progress in their goals and objectives as well as in the general education curriculum.**

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access sheets and location of other records.

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An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding maintenance/destruction of records.

Area(s) of Need:

Maintenance/Destruction of Records - Child study team members reported that the district only maintains the last IEP and the last evaluation reports for each student who graduates instead of maintaining the last five years of records that would serve to demonstrate eligibility for federal grant monies.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that records are maintained in accordance with the requirements of the pupil records code.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Rumson Fair-Haven School District on November 19, 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 to be commended for the exceptionally 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 prompt implementation of corrective action to address some of the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process.

At a focus group meeting held on October 16, 2003 and attended by nine parents, they reported that the district provides a good quality of education for students with special needs and that CST members and teachers monitor student progress very well and provide students with the help they need to be academically successful. Parents liked the fact that their children are invited to meetings and encouraged to participate in the development of their own transition service plans. Additionally, parents stated that they are always informed of the various program/service options available for students.

A review of data indicated that the Rumson-Fair Haven School District had a classification rate of 13.2% during the 2001-2002 school year, which is below the state average of 14.3% and that the district has steadily increased the percentage of school aged students with special needs who were educated more than 80% of the day with their non-disabled peers. The data show that 78.6% of students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers. The district is commended for its efforts in this area. Additionally, 93% of the special needs students who took the HSPA during school year 2001-2002, scored in the proficient range in Mathematics, while 66% of them scored proficient in Language Arts. The district has successfully maintained a graduation rate in excess of 90% for both the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years.

Statewide Assessment, Graduation and Procedural Safeguards 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.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, parent development, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, certification, facilities, length of school day/year, referral process, direct referrals, summer referrals, identification timeline/participants, consent for evaluations, bilingual evaluations, written reports signed/dated, notices, planning meetings, parental consent, eligibility meeting participants, age of majority, implementation dates, 90-day timelines, annual review timelines, individualized decision-making process, present levels of performance(PLEPs), IEP considerations and documentation, agency involvement, student/agency invitations, interim alternate educational settings, 45-day return, procedural safeguards/due process and access sheets and location of other records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-service training for professional and paraprofessional staff, adaptive physical education for students in out-of-district placements, goals and objectives in IEPs for those students identified as needing counseling services, receipt of health/medical summaries from the school nurse, appropriate assessment tools, strategies to gather information,

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acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, copy of evaluation reports to parents, signatures of agreement/disagreement, required participants at IEP meetings, IEP statements/ considerations, annual goals/objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, vocational representative in attendance at IEP meetings, annual review timelines, teacher responsibility, changing students' schedules, IEPs not being in effect prior to start of program/services, least restrictive environment, individual interests/preferences, Statement of Needed Transition Services, written notice to the case managers, functional behavioral assessments, convening manifestation determination meetings, suspension tracking, interim alternative educational settings, insufficient staff, consultation time, description of special class programs and documentation of group sizes for speech in IEPs of out-of-district students.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding components of child find, components of functional assessments, required participants at reevaluation meetings, criteria and statement of eligibility for Specific Learning Disability (SLD), notification to out-of-district students regarding participation in non-academic/extracurricular activities, home instruction and maintenance/ destruction of records.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Rumson Fair-Haven School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.