

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: South Hunterdon Regional High School District

County: Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: April 29, 30, 2002

Monitoring Team: Dorothenia Boyd-Jackson, Barbara Tucker

Background Information:

During the 2000-2001 school year, the South Hunterdon 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 South Hunterdon 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 South Hunterdon 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 April 18, 2002. 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.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, Transition and Graduation 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.

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Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Policy and Procedures and dissemination of IDEA information. The required Statement of Assurances and procedures have been submitted to the Hunterdon County Office.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding professional/paraprofessional training in the areas of differentiating instruction, in-class support teams, roles/responsibilities and utilization of instructional aides, and alignment of goals/objectives with the core curriculum content standards. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

No additional areas of need were identified 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 extended school year, length of school day/school year, facilities and certification of staff.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding documentation of student contact by related service personnel and transfer procedures. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of speech/language services.

Area of Need:

Provision of Speech/Language Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff/parent interviews and record review that the district does not provide speech/language services as required by IEPs because the district has been unable to employ a speech therapist to provide these services. The district has advertised but has been unsuccessful in hiring a speech/language therapist since July 2001.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district provides speech/language services as required by IEPs. The plan must include a mechanism to employ staff in sufficient numbers, redeploy existing staff, or identify additional options to ensure the provision of required services. The plan must also include a mechanism to ensure the provision of compensatory services for those services not provided during this school year.**

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Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, notice of meetings, meetings in native language, independent evaluations, and 15 and 20-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding policy and procedures for the selection and training of surrogate parents. 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 visit regarding notices in native language and written notice.

Areas of Need:

Notice in Native Language – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not provide notices in the native language of parent(s), when feasible.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that notices are provided in the native language of parent(s), when feasible. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of these procedures.**

Written Notice – During the on-site monitoring it was determined the district uses the IEP as written notice. A review of records indicated the district does not provide the parent with a copy of the IEP within 15 days of a reevaluation or annual review meeting. As a result, parents are not receiving notice in a timely manner nor are they receiving a copy of the IEP prior to its implementation.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notice is provided within 15 days of a reevaluation or annual review meeting. The plan must also ensure a copy of the IEP is provided to parents prior to its implementation. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of these procedures.**

Section IV: Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding pre-referral interventions/effectiveness and documentation, direct referrals from staff,

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health/medical summaries, and vision/hearing screenings. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding Child Find activities.

Area of Need:

Child Find Activities - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district's Child Find activities do not include activities to identify migrant and homeless students who are potentially disabled.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that Child Find activities include migrant and homeless students who are potentially disabled. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure 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, and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding acceptance/rejection of outside reports. 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 for students eligible for special education and related services and written reports.

Areas of Need:

Functional Assessments – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that functional assessments do not consistently contain the required components. The missing components varied from assessment to assessment.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that functional assessments contain the required components identified in NJAC 6A:14-3.4(d)2. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Written Reports – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that evaluation reports are not dated.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding documentation of the statement of eligibility and the provision of evaluation reports to parents/adult students. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks current procedures to bring about the required changes. The improvement plan needs to be revised to include these procedures.

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

Section VIII: IEP

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the development of appropriate goals/objectives related to the core curriculum content standards. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of IEPs to parents/adult students prior to implementation. This area was addressed in Section III.

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making and continuum of programs.

During self-assessment the district identified concerns regarding nonacademic and extracurricular participation for out-of-district students.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the consideration/documentation of the discussion of supplemental aids and services

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considered but rejected as insufficient for the student in the general education curriculum.

Area of Need:

Least Restrictive Environment Documentation – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district considers/discusses supplementary aids/services prior to removing a student from regular education, the individual aids/services considered and rejected are not documented in the LRE section of IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that supplementary aids/services that have been considered and rejected prior to removal from regular education are documented in the LRE section of the IEP. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section X: Transition to Pre-School

This section is not applicable to the South Hunterdon Regional High School District.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of procedures, behavioral intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, manifestations determinations and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding documentation to the case managers, suspension tracking and procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the lack of preparation for special education students who take the HSPA, lack of educational materials needed by teachers to prepare students for the HSPA, and the alignment of the math and English curricula to the HSPA and GEPA. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need. The district further identified concerns regarding participation of disabled students in the Special Review Assessment process. The district has developed an improvement plan that is not

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sufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this element.

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

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size waivers, age range waivers and schedules.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding home instruction, consultation time for teachers, team teaching, special class programs, and instructional aides. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

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

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

Area of Need:

Documentation of Records in Other Locations – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not identify the location of other records maintained by the district in the central files.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the location of other records maintained by the district is documented in central files.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the South Hunterdon Regional High School District on April 29, 30, 2002. 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 exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with minor revisions, 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, two parents and several district representatives attended the meeting. One parent expressed a concern regarding the provision of speech/language services in the district. Both parents agreed that district staff elicit their opinions and involve them in all aspects of the IEP process.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Reevaluation, Graduation and Transition.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Policies and Procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, length of day/school year, facilities, certification of staff, areas of consent, notice of meetings, written notice, meetings native language, independent evaluations, 15 and 20-day timelines, the referral process, summer referrals, identification meetings/timeline/participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, re-evaluation timelines, planning meetings/participants, eligibility meeting/participants, criteria, IEP participants, considerations, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timeline, IEP teacher access/responsibility, individualized decision-making, continuum of programs, transition service needs, needed transition services, IEP consideration /documentation, student/agency invitation, agency involvement, discipline procedures, behavioral intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, manifestations determinations and interim alternative educational lists/45 day return, approved accommodations/modifications for statewide assessment, IEP/assessment documentation, IEP/graduation requirements, written notice of graduation, access to records, access sheets, and maintenance/ destruction of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional and paraprofessional training, documentation of the provision of related services, transfer procedures, surrogate parents, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals from staff, health/medical summaries, vision/hearing screenings, acceptance/rejection of reports, documentation of the statement of eligibility, the provision of evaluation reports to parents/adult students, development of appropriate goals/objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, nonacademic and extracurricular participation for out-of-district students, documentation of student's removal from program to the case managers, suspension tracking, procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, issues related to the HSPA, home

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instruction, consultation time for teachers, program description of team teaching, description of special classes programs, and instructional aides.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding the provision speech/language services, notices in native language, written notice, provision of IEPs, Child Find activities, functional assessments, written reports, least restrictive environment documentation, participation in the Special Review Assessment, and documentation of records in other locations.

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.