

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

District: Stanhope Borough School District

County: Sussex

Monitoring Dates: October 9 and 10,2001

Monitoring Team: Zola Mills, Janet Wright, and Thomas Walsh

Background Information:

During the 2001 – 2002 school year, the Stanhope School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Stanhope 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 Stanhope 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 at Valley Hope School on October 2, 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.

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

District Strengths:

The district should be commended for their innovative after school family programs in which parents and students experience working and learning together on an academic project in the areas of science, math or computers.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, FAPE, Procedural Safeguards, Eligibility, LRE, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, 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.

Section IV: LOCATION, REFERRAL, IDENTIFICATION

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the referral process, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process the district identified an area of need regarding child find activities for preschool students. The plan is insufficient to address this area of need.

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

Areas of Need:

Preschool Child Find- During self-assessment the district determined that Child Find advertising for preschoolers was insufficient. The district's plan needs to be revised to ensure that advertising is more widely disseminated in the community.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure child find activities are sufficient to locate, refer, and identify preschool students in a more effective manner.**

Section V: EVALUATION

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district identified themselves compliant in multi-disciplinary, functional, and standardized assessments; acceptance/rejection of reports; and bilingual evaluations.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the dating of written reports.

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

Areas of Need:

Written Reports- During the on-site visit it was determined that although written reports were developed and signed, the evaluators did not date them.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that all written reports are dated.**

Section VI: REEVALUATION

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding planning meeting, participants, and reevaluations of students turning 5.

During the self-assessment process the district identified the need for additional staff. The district has already addressed this need by hiring these needed staff members.

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

Section VIII: INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of sufficient staff to allow full participation of CST in meetings, copy of the IEP to parent(s) or adult student prior to implementation, and required considerations and statements. The district has addressed the lack of sufficient staff by hiring additional personnel. The district's improvement does not sufficiently address the other issues because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of these procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

Section X: TRANSITION

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding attendance at preschool transition planning conferences, evaluations and placement in

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

program by the third birthday, student/agency invitations, agency involvement, and IEP components for transition.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of career awareness, exploration, and preparation. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because it lacks a training component and a mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of the training component. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

XIV. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size, age range, speech and language group sizes, and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of providing an apportioned time for case management responsibilities. The improvement plan is insufficient to address this are because it lacks a mechanism to determine whether the training is effective. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

XV. STUDENT RECORDS

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in parent/adult student access to records, access sheets, maintenance, and documentation of locations of records.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding training of staff in the district policies and procedures for the destruction of student records.

Areas of Need:

Destruction of Student Records - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff, that although there were district policies and procedures in place regarding the destruction of student records, in-service training was required to acquaint staff members with the policies.

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

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include in-service training for staff regarding the destruction of student records.**

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

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Stanhope School District on October 9 and 10, 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 exceptionally thorough and 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 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. Many of the concerns raised by the parents during the focus group meeting had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included maintaining required policies and procedures, provision of FAPE, implementation of all procedural safeguards, health summaries/vision/hearing screenings, the referral process, health summaries, hearing and vision screenings, identification meetings, preschool transition, evaluations and reevaluations, eligibility, IEP meetings, annual reviews and 90-day timelines, teacher access and knowledge of IEP, provision of the least restrictive environment, transition needs and services, discipline standards, statewide assessments, class size, age range, speech group size, home instruction, and procedures for the maintenance and destruction of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development, apportioned time for case management, required considerations and statements, vocational and career exploration opportunities, and a need to increase preschool Child Find activities.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within two standards regarding written reports and record destruction.

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.

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