

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

Charter school: New Horizons Charter School

County: Essex

Monitoring Dates: November 25, 2002

Monitoring Team: Damen Cooper, Gladys Miller and Susan Smahl

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the New Horizons Charter School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the New Horizons Charter School 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 New Horizons Charter School 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 New Horizons Charter School on November 18, 2002. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE team reviewed charter school documents, including charter school 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 charter school's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

Charter School Strengths:

The charter school is commended for providing additional academic support to all students before and after school through the New Communities Corporation.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

The charter school also sponsors a High Five Club. Students who earn five “student of the day” certificates receive special recognition and awards.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, Eligibility, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the charter school during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of policies and procedures.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of staff development and dissemination of IDEA information. The charter school’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, related services, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of hearing aides and monitoring of IEP’s for special education students placed in general education classes. The charter school’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. The charter school further identified concerns in the area of transfer students. The charter school has not submitted an improvement plan to address this area of need. The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, notices of meetings, written notice, meetings, native language and independent evaluations.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of surrogate parents. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, staff interviews indicated that the charter school has implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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 charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, referral process, direct referrals, summer referrals, health summaries, and identification meeting participants and timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of vision and hearing screenings and hearing aids. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the charter school has implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the area of hearing aids.

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

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of reports.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding multi-disciplinary evaluations, inclusion of eligibility statements in written reports for students eligible for speech and language services and written reports for students eligible for special education and related services.

Area(s) of Need:

Multi-Disciplinary – During the on-site monitoring, a review of records indicated that speech therapist reports did not include an educational impact statement from the classroom teacher.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech reports include an educational impact statement obtained from the classroom teacher. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Eligibility Statements – During the on-site monitoring, a review of records indicated that individual speech assessment reports included eligibility statements may only be determined by the members of the IEP team and not by individual evaluators.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech reports do not contain statements or determinations that may only be made by a duly configured IEP team. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants, implementation dates and teacher knowledge and access.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of goals and objective aligned to the core curriculum content standards, annual review timelines and ninety-day timelines. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the charter school has implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas of goals and objectives aligned to the core curriculum content standards, annual review timelines and ninety-day timelines.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding considerations/required statements.

Area(s) of Need:

Considerations/required statements - During the on-site monitoring, a review of records indicated that IEPs were missing required statements concerning whether the student is exempt from school discipline policies.

- **The charter school will revise the IEP format to include all required statements. It is recommended that the charter school adopt the model IEP developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making, supplementary aids and services, regular education access and nonacademic/extra curricular participation.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of continuum. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the charter

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

school has implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the area of continuum.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding considerations and documentation.

Area(s) of Need:

Consideration and documentation – During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated that the charter school’s IEP does not include all four statements required when considering the least restrictive environment.

- **The charter school will revise its IEP format to include all required statements. It is recommended that the charter school adopt the model IEP developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size, age range and group sizes for speech therapy.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of teacher consultation time. The charter school’s improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding home instruction approvals.

Area(s) of Need:

Home instruction approvals – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that the charter school does not request approval from the county office prior to placing a student on home instruction.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it obtains county office approval prior to placing a student on home instruction. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the New Horizons Community Charter School on November 25, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the charter school's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the charter school's improvement plan. The charter school is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the charter school 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 charter school is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address some of the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many of those identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the charter school is commended for the many areas that were determined by the charter school and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

Though a focus group meeting was conducted and parents were invited, none attended.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, parent training, extended school year, provision of related services, length of day and year, facilities, certifications, consent, notices of meetings content and provision, written notices content and provisions, notices in native language, independent evaluations, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, identification meetings timelines and participants, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, reevaluation, eligibility, IEP meeting and participants, present levels of education performance, implementation dates, IEPs to parents, decision making process, consideration of supplementary aids and services, regular education access, discipline, age range, group sizes for speech therapy, access sheets, maintenance and destruction and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified areas of need regarding staff development, dissemination of IDEA information, transfer students, vision and hearing screenings, hearing aids, surrogate parents, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, annual review timelines, ninety-day timelines, continuum of programs, class size, class description and access and request.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding multi-disciplinary evaluations, eligibility statements, considerations/required statements, and home instruction.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the New Horizons Community Charter School will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.