



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

JON S. CORZINE
Governor

LUCILLE E. DAVY
Commissioner

November 9, 2009

Mr. Robert P. Mooney, Superintendent
Hawthorne School District
445 Lafayette Avenue
Hawthorne, NJ 07506

Subject: Special Education Monitoring - Hawthorne School District

Dear Mr. Mooney:

On December 4, 5 and 16, 2008 the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (NJOSPEP), conducted an onsite monitoring visit in the Hawthorne School District to determine compliance with federal and state special education requirements. The members of the monitoring team were Nicole Buten and Robert Schweitzer.

NJOSPEP initiated a new five year self-assessment/monitoring cycle during the 2006-2007 school year. The monitoring system is data driven and aligned with the State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators, including the federal monitoring priorities established by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004). Specifically, the NJOSPEP monitoring process is focused on improving educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities and ensuring compliance with those special education requirements related to positive student outcomes.

The special education self-assessment and monitoring process focused on requirements related to the following areas:

- **Transition to Adult Life**
- **State Assessment**
- **Discipline Procedures**
- **Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment**
- **Parent Involvement**
- **Disproportionate Representation of Specific Racial-Ethnic Groups in Special Education**
- **Evaluation and Reevaluation**
- **Individualized Education Program**
- **Programs and Services**

The Hawthorne School District was selected for the self-assessment process for the 2006-2007 school year due to a pattern of disproportionate representation of specific racial/ethnic groups (i.e., Hispanic – All Disabilities) with respect to eligibility determinations for special education based on the Annual Data Reports submitted to NJOSEP in December 2003, December 2004 and December 2005. This pattern was no longer evidenced in the Annual Data Reports submitted in December 2006, October 2007, and October 2008. The district should continue implementation of its improvement plan activities and continue to track general education interventions and referrals to the child study team by race/ethnicity in order to proactively prevent disproportionate representation of specific racial-ethnic groups.

The NJDOE Self-Assessment/Monitoring Process

The first step in the monitoring process was completion of a self-assessment which required the district to review student outcome data and policies, procedures and practices related to federal monitoring priorities. The district was provided with a comparison of district student outcome data to relevant targets established in New Jersey's SPP. Based on the data review, the district identified areas for "Continuous Improvement" and Areas of Noncompliance with federal and state regulations related to the priority areas. The self-assessment and improvement plan were submitted to NJOSEP in January 2008.

Following review of the self-assessment and the improvement plan, an onsite monitoring visit was conducted. A review of specific federal and state requirements related to the education of students with disabilities was completed during the visit. The monitoring team reviewed district documents, including district policies and procedures, a sample of student records, master student lists, class lists, other relevant information, and schedules of students, teachers and related service personnel. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, general education and special education teachers, speech-language specialists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Monitoring Results

The enclosed Table of Findings details the onsite monitoring results with regard to the following:

Status of improvement plan activities

For each area in need of continuous improvement identified by the district, the status of improvement activities designed to improve student outcomes is provided. If not identified as completed, the district must demonstrate implementation of improvement plan activities in accordance with the timelines delineated in the improvement plan.

Findings of noncompliance identified by the district during the self-assessment

No areas of noncompliance were identified by the district during the self-assessment.

Findings of noncompliance identified during onsite monitoring

No areas of noncompliance were identified by the NJOSEP monitoring team during the onsite monitoring.

The results of the special education monitoring must be reviewed at the next meeting of the district's Board of Education. A copy of the minutes from the Board of Education meeting documenting the review by the Board must be submitted to:

Mrs. Nicole Buten
New Jersey Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
PO Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-0500

Questions regarding the enclosed monitoring report should be directed to Dr. Peggy McDonald, manager of the Bureau of Program Accountability, at 609-292-7605. NJOSEP appreciates the cooperation of district staff members during the self-assessment/monitoring process.

Sincerely,



Roberta Wohle, Director
Office of Special Education Programs

RW/PM/NB

Enclosure

c: Division of Field Services
Barbara Gantwerk
Peggy McDonald
Nicole Buten
Robert Gilmartin
Gladys Miller
Alexander Pedicone

TABLE OF FINDINGS
Special Education Monitoring Results
IDEA 2004 and New Jersey Administrative Code Requirements
Hawthorne School District

Section I: Transition to Adult Life – Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or monitoring.

Area(s) in Need of Continuous Improvement

Area	Status of Improvement Plan
The district reported a problem with the method of collecting and recording graduation data. As a result, the district developed an improvement plan to ensure a method for accurately collecting and recording graduation data.	The district has implemented their continuous improvement plan activity. Review of subsequent graduation rates indicated that the district has exceeded the State's target graduation rate.

Section II: STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT- Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or monitoring.

Section III: DISCIPLINE- Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or monitoring.

Section IV: LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT- Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or monitoring.

Area(s) in Need of Continuous Improvement

Area	Status of Improvement Plan
The district developed an improvement plan to increase the array of supports available to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities in programs within the district.	The district is the process of implementing its plan in accordance with established timelines to be able to transition more students to the least restrictive environment that will meet their educational needs.

TABLE OF FINDINGS
Special Education Monitoring Results
IDEA 2004 and New Jersey Administrative Code Requirements
Hawthorne School District

Section V: PARENT INVOLVEMENT- No noncompliance identified during self-assessment or monitoring

Of the parents who were interviewed, all indicated that they were satisfied with the district's programs and services. Parents stated that they were involved in the planning of their children's educational programs.

Section VI: DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION- Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or monitoring.

The Hawthorne School District was selected for the self-assessment process for the 2006-2007 school year due to a pattern of disproportionate representation of specific racial/ethnic groups (i.e., Hispanic – All Disabilities) with respect to eligibility determinations for special education based on the Annual Data Reports submitted to NJOSEP in December 2003, December 2004 and December 2005. This pattern was no longer evidenced in the Annual Data Reports submitted in December 2006, October 2007, and October 2008. The district should continue implementation of its improvement plan activities and continue to track general education interventions and referrals by race/ethnicity in order to proactively prevent disproportionate representation of specific racial-ethnic groups.

Area(s) in Need of Continuous Improvement

Areas	Status of Improvement Plan
The district has developed a plan to address disproportionate representation within the special education population by tracking referrals to the Intervention and Referral Services committee, and interventions provided, by race and ethnicity. The district also planned to provide professional development opportunities for staff members regarding factors leading to disproportionate representation.	The district is in the process of implementing its continuous improvement plan in accordance with the established timelines. Administrators developed a district-wide system for collecting I & RS data regarding intervention type, frequency, duration and effectiveness. Additionally, the district has developed a procedure for analyzing the I & RS data collected to track the effectiveness of interventions by race/ethnicity and gender. Professional development opportunities have been provided to staff regarding factors influencing student learning and achievement as they relate to race, culture, ethnicity and language.

Section VII: Evaluation and Reevaluation- Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or monitoring.

TABLE OF FINDINGS
Special Education Monitoring Results
IDEA 2004 and New Jersey Administrative Code Requirements
Hawthorne School District

Section VIII: IEP- Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or monitoring.

Section IX: Programs and Services- Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or monitoring.

All documentation regarding the implementation of continuous improvement plans must be submitted to the following address in accordance with the established timelines in the district's self-assessment and improvement plan.

Nicole A. Buten
New Jersey Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
PO Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-0500