

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

Receiving School: Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission

County: Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: September 17, 18 and 19, 2003

Monitoring Team: Paul Bilik, Sandra Gogerty, Denise Wilkens

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission 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 development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and
- The organization and delivery of programs and services to meet the needs of the students with disabilities.

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 Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) 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.

During the monitoring process, the monitoring team reviewed Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission's documents such as policies and procedures, student records from sending districts, lesson plans, services as indicated in IEPs, staff evaluations, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students/teachers/related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews were conducted with the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers and related service personnel.

School Strengths:

The Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission is commended for providing opportunities for students, where appropriate, to return to their sending districts for some of their academic instruction and for participation in nonacademic activities.

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Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Facility Requirements and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings

During self-assessment, the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding staff requirements, annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. Documentation of improvement activities were submitted and approved by the county office of education.

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 Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services at no cost to the parents, extended school year programs, programs provided in accordance with IEPs and program open to observation by LEA and DOE.

During the self-assessment process, the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission identified concerns in the area of maintenance of hearing aids. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding provision of occupational therapy services and documentation of speech language services.

Areas of Need

Provision of Related Services- During the on-site visit through record reviews and interviews it was determined that the related service of occupational therapy is not provided to students in accordance with IEPs. Additionally, through a review of records, it was determined that the related service of speech therapy was not correctly documented.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all students receive related services in accordance with IEPs and that all services are appropriately documented. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of appropriate supervision of physical therapy assistants (PTA) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals, job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office, criminal history verification and having an approved professional development plan.

During the self-assessment process, the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission identified concerns in the area of certified/licensed staff. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meetings conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with appropriate receiving school participants, IEP meetings conducted with students age 14 and over, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing relating to administration, implementation of IEP components and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit concerning communication to sending districts regarding counseling goals and objectives.

Areas of Need

Communication to Sending Districts Regarding Missing Components- During the on-site visit, through record reviews and interviews it was determined that the school does not communicate with sending districts when counseling goals and objectives are missing.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school communicates with sending districts when IEP components, including counseling goals and objectives are missing. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section VI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of interim alternative educational setting and termination of students.

During the self-assessment process, the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission School identified concerns in the areas of written procedures for suspensions, changes to program/placement and procedures for time out rooms. The schools' improvement plan is sufficient to address the areas of written procedures for suspensions and changes to program/placement. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of time-out rooms because it lacks a mechanism to ensure that new staff members are trained in the use of the time-out room in a timely manner. The plan must include an administrative oversight to ensure that procedures are followed in the use of time out rooms. The plan must be revised to include these components.**

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

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size/age range, description of special class programs implementing IEPs and home instruction.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding nursing services relating to the implementation of N.J.A.C. 6A:16.

Area of Need:

Nursing Services - During the on-site visit through staff interviews it was determined that school nurses have not received training in the procedures required for the implementation of N.J.A.C. 6A:16.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school nurses are trained in the requirements of N.J.A.C. 6A:16. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission on September 17, 2003. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission's improvement plan.

The receiving school is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the receiving school was able to identify many areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Facility Requirements and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included staff requirements, annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings, length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services provided at no cost to the parents, extended school year programs, programs provided in accordance with IEPs and program open to observation by LEA and DOE, appropriate supervision of physical therapy assistants (PTA) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals, job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office, criminal history verification, having an approved professional development plan, IEP meetings conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with appropriate receiving school participants, IEP meetings conducted with students age 14 and over, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing relating to administration, implementation of IEP components, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, interim alternative educational setting, termination of students, class size/age range, description of special class programs implementing IEPs and home instruction .

During the self-assessment process, the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission School identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, maintenance of hearing aids, certified/licensed staff, written procedures for suspensions, changes to program/placement and procedures for time out rooms.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding provision of related services in accordance with the IEPs, communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components and implementation of nursing services.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs and to the county office of education to address those areas that require revisions.

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