

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

**Receiving School:** Mercer County Vocational Technical School  
(Sypek Center/Assunpink Center)

**County:** Mercer

**Monitoring Dates:** January 23-25, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Carmen Fanucci, Karen Frumen, Elaine Lerner, Debbie Magee, Dolores Walther and Denise Wilkens

**Background Information:**

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Mercer County Vocational Technical Schools (MCVTS) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the MCVTS 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 MCVTS 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 receiving school 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 receiving school's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers, parents and related service personnel.

**School Strengths:**

The MCVTS is commended for their character education program that is infused into the existing technical education curricula. Students enrolled in grades ten, eleven and twelve participate. Community outreach is included through coordination with the skilled trade craft committees comprised of area business owners and employers. The school social worker conducts weekly small group sessions for discussion and reflection by a core group of fifteen students. The group sessions touch on group building, values and

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ethics, decision making, problem solving, goal setting, self-image, anger management and relationship content building.

The MCVTS is further commended for the digital portfolios in which all graduating students are able to demonstrate performance based skills. The Mercer Educational Technology Training Center (ETTC) provides an instructor to collaborate with a technical school instructor. Students are able to verbalize and communicate skills learned in the specific career program area to a prospective employer. This project focuses on and meets the need to infuse Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) for Career Education and Consumer, Family and Life Skills. This culminating project enables students to describe personal skills and qualities. It addresses thinking skills, self-knowledge, career planning, and employability skills utilizing technology, information and other resources. The digital portfolio also enables students to think creatively and to further develop their thoughts and ideas.

In addition, all students participate in a variety of community outreach programs that include: Canned Food Drives, Clothing Drives and Hurricane Relief. Selected students participate in clinical internships with preschool programs and senior citizen centers. Pre-school students visit the Sypek Center to interact with students in Health and Childcare, Cosmetology and Culinary Foods.

Finally, many of the students participate in special functions presenting or serving the public at conferences, banquets, assemblies and seminars. Students provide tours of the campus; act as guides for parents' nights, open houses and award ceremonies. A student group titled the Advisory Council of Elite Students (ACES) is selected from each program as leaders to represent the entire student body. They plan and implement senior trips and social activities on a school-wide level.

### **Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements and Discipline** were determined to be areas of compliance by the MCVTS during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

### **Section I: General Provisions**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the MCVTS accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding staff development, annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

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

#### **Area of Need:**

**Policies and Procedures**—During the on-site visit, through observations, staff interviews and a review of the district policy manual and school handbook, it was determined that the school's policies did not reflect current administrative code requirements and, in many cases, gave inconsistent information regarding attendance, medication, personal electronic devices, dress code and student records.

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- **The MCVTS will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that policies and procedures are revised for consistency, updated with reference to current administrative code requirements and approved by the board. The plan must include procedures, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Section V: Individualized Education Program/Annual Review**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the MCVTS accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meeting conducted with students, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, implementation of IEP components and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding IEP meeting conducted with required receiving school participants, current IEP prior to service delivery and communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components such as goals and objectives for special education vocational classes.

**Areas of Need:**

**IEP Meeting Conducted with Required Receiving School Participants-** During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and record reviews, it was determined that many vocational school teachers do not attend IEP meetings because of distance from the sending districts.

- **The MCVTS must revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that arrangements are made with sending districts so that student's vocational teachers attend IEP meetings in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.7(e)1 ii regardless of the location of the sending district. Participation may be arranged with the sending districts through alternate methods, such as teleconferencing, to ensure participation in IEP meetings.**

**Current IEP Prior to Service Delivery -** During the on-site visit, through record reviews, it was determined that the school did not consistently have current IEPs for students in attending MCVTS.

- **The MCVTS must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that they maintain current IEPs on-site for students enrolled at the school. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Communication to Sending Districts Regarding Missing IEP Components-** During the on-site visit, through record reviews, it was determined that the vocational school does not communicate to sending districts regarding missing IEP components such as

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goals and objectives for special education vocational classes as specified in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.7(d)1.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to provide for collaboration and communication with local school districts that results in the development of a complete IEP that includes IEP components, such as goals and objectives for special education vocational classes. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section VII: Programs and Services**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the MCVTS accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, special classes serving students with similar educational needs and teachers trained and instructing in CCCS.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding dispensing medication, nursing facilities and employment of a certified school nurse.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Certified School Nurse/ Dispensing Medication-**During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and record reviews, it was determined that MCVTS Assunpink Center does not employ a certified school nurse as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(e). MCVTS Assunpink Center employs an instructional staff member, who is also a registered nurse, who dispenses medication. This staff member is employed and certified as a Health Occupations teacher and not as a school nurse. There is no documentation that the assignment plan for certified and noncertified nurses was submitted to the county superintendent for review and approval annually as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(f)3 was provided.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the required full range of nursing services is provided by employing a certified school nurse for the Assunpink Center. The school must update the nursing plan and may request a waiver of the full time school certified school nurse requirement through the regulatory Equivalency and Waiver Process in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:5-1.1 to ensure that nursing services are provided in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:16. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Nursing Facilities-** During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a tour of the Assunpink Center confirmed that the school does not have a nurse's station.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include activities to identify an appropriate location, for the provision of nursing services, equipped with a private rest area and bathroom facility with final facility approval from the county office of education.**

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**Section VIII: Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the MCVTS accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records limited to authorized persons, access sheets, daily attendance available to LEAs and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the MCVTS identified concern in the area regarding location of other records specified in central file. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

During the on-site visit, an additional area of need was identified regarding compliance with regulations regarding student records and written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences.

**Areas of Need:**

**Conformance with Student Record Regulations** - During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and record reviews, it was determined that documents developed by MCVTS do not reference current student record regulations.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure policies and procedures are revised with reference to current administrative code requirements. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Written Communication to LEAs Regarding Five Days of Tardiness/Absences-** During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and record reviews, it was determined that the MCVTS does not consistently notify districts when students reach five days of tardiness/absences.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the sending districts are notified when students reach five days of tardiness/absences. The plan must include 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 MCVTS on January 23-25, 2006. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the MCVTS's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

The receiving school is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the receiving school was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that, with some revision, will bring about systemic change. The receiving school is further commended for the many areas determined by the receiving school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

### **Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements and Discipline** were determined to be areas of compliance by MCVTS during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the onsite visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the MCVTS during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included staff development, annual reports, amendments, programs provided in nonsectarian settings, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meeting conducted with students, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, implementation of IEP components, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, special classes serving students with similar educational needs, teachers trained and instructing in CCCSs, return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records limited to authorized persons, access sheets, daily attendance available to LEAs and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the MCVTS identified an area of need regarding location of records. The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding policies and procedures, IEP conducted with required receiving school participants, current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components, employment of a certified school nurse/dispensing medication, nursing facilities, conformance with student record regulations and written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences.

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