

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Receiving School: North Hudson Academy

County: Hudson

Monitoring Dates: October 7, 8, and November 13, 2002

Monitoring Team: Elaine Lerner, Gary Molenaar, Susan Smahl

Background Information:

During the 2001– 2002 school year, the North Hudson Academy conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the North Hudson Academy 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 North Hudson Academy 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 and related service personnel.

School Strengths:

The North Hudson Academy is commended for the commitment and dedication of the faculty and staff who provide a safe environment for students to take academic and emotional risks. This collegial and collaborative faculty provides instruction presented in thematic instructional units stressing cross-content curricular standards. The school also encourages and helps many students to participate in extra-curricular and athletic activities in the students' home district.

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The North Hudson Academy provides a behavior management system that is infused in the instructional day for all students. The provision of counseling services augments the students' academic program. Each year an "Adventure-Based" counseling program is offered where students and faculty/staff spend two days at a local overnight camp.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

FAPE, Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements, Discipline, and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the North Hudson Academy during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the North Hudson Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures, annual reports, amendments, and provision of program and services in a nonsectarian setting.

During the self-assessment process, the North Hudson Academy identified concerns in the area of staff development. The receiving 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 North Hudson Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of staff attendance at IEP meetings, current IEPs, accessibility to IEPs, staff knowledge of accommodations and modifications, observation of proposed placement, statewide assessments, and progress reports.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified concerns regarding implementation of IEP components. The school has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address the area of IEP components.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components.

Area of Need:

Communication to Sending Districts - During the on-site visit, through record reviews and interviews, it was determined that the school does not consistently communicate to sending districts when IEPs are missing components. In addition, through interviews and record reviews, it was determined that the school does not have an extended school year

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(ESY) program, and as a result ESY programs are not considered at IEP meetings regardless of student needs.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the school communicates with sending districts when IEP components are missing. In addition, the school must include procedures to ensure that staff members inform districts that ESY must be considered at IEP meetings for all students to ensure that those students who do require an ESY program receive the appropriate program. The plan must also be revised to include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of instructional class sizes, certifications, exceptions, description of special class programs, home instruction, dispensing medication/nursing services.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified a concern regarding Core Curriculum Content Standards/ Core Curriculum Content Standards for Students with Severe Disabilities (CCCS/CCSSSD). The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the dispensing of medication/nursing services.

Area of Need:

Dispensing Medication/Nursing Services - During the on-site visit, through record reviews and interviews, it was determined that the school does not consistently administer medication to students by authorized individuals in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3. Further, it was determined that over-the-counter medication is dispensed with verbal parental consent, without the requisite doctor's orders or prescription.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that only authorized individuals administer medication to students and that required doctor's orders/prescriptions are on-file for any administration of over-the-counter medication to students. In addition, the school must include procedures to ensure that staff members are aware of the procedures regarding the administration of medication. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the North Hudson Academy on October 7 and 8, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the North Hudson Academy's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the school's improvement plan. The North Hudson Academy is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the receiving school was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that 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 identified as consistently compliant by the North Hudson Academy during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, annual reports, amendments, the provision of programs and services in nonsectarian settings, length of day/year, physical education, hearing aids, services provided at no cost to the parents, observation of programs, provision of services as per IEP, related services, certified/licensed staff, dual employment, job descriptions, approved professional development plan, approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections, fire drills, staff attendance at IEP meetings, current IEPs, accessibility of IEPs, staff knowledge of accommodations and modifications, observation of proposed placement, progress reports, discipline, changes to program/placement, suspensions, tracking of suspensions, interim alternative educational setting, terminations, instructional class sizes, exceptions, description of special class programs, CCCS, home instruction, pupil record code, return of records, access and location of records, daily attendance, notification to sending districts of excessive absences, and mandated health records.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified areas of need regarding staff development, implementation of IEP components, and Core Curriculum Content Standards for Students with Severe Disabilities.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year consideration during IEP meetings, communication with sending districts regarding missing IEP components, administering medication, nursing and medical services.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the school 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.