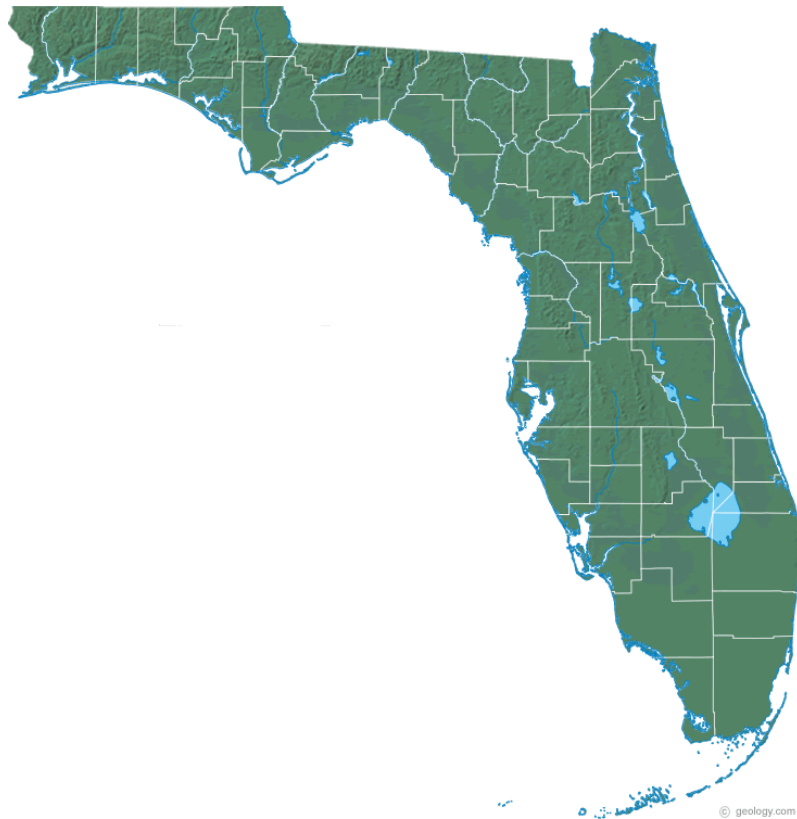


Duval County School District

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring

Exceptional Student Education Programs

April 19–23, 2010



Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
Florida Department of Education

This publication is available through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Florida Department of Education. For additional information on this publication, or for a list of available publications, contact the Clearinghouse Information Center, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Division of Public Schools, Florida Department of Education, Room 628 Turlington Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400.

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June 22, 2010

Mr. Ed Pratt-Dannals, Superintendent
Duval County School District
1701 Prudential Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32207-8182

Dear Superintendent Pratt-Dannals:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report of On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs* for Duval County School District. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site visit to your district on April 19–23, 2010, which included student record reviews, interviews with school and district staff, classroom observations, and student focus groups. The final report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

The Duval County School District was selected for an on-site monitoring visit due to a pattern of poor performance over time in State Performance Plan (SPP) indicator two, percent of youth with individual educational plans (IEPs) dropping out of high school. Mr. Kenneth Sutton, Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Student Services Director, and his staff were very helpful during the Bureau's preparation of the visit and during the on-site monitoring. In addition, the principals and other staff members at the schools visited welcomed and assisted Bureau staff members. The district demonstrated promising practices relating to dropout prevention; however, the Bureau's on-site monitoring activities identified three discrepancies that required corrective action. Following the on-site visit and prior to the dissemination of this report, the noncompliance was corrected by the district and validated by the Bureau.

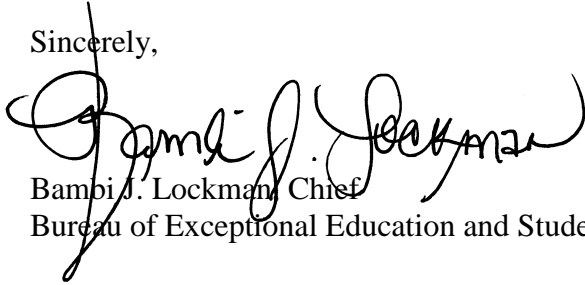
BAMBI J. LOCKMAN
Chief

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Mr. Ed Pratt-Dannals
June 22, 2010
Page Two

Thank you for your commitment to improving services for exceptional education for students in Duval County. If there are any questions regarding this final report, please contact Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance, at (850) 245-0476 or via electronic mail at Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bambi J. Lockman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "L".

Bambi J. Lockman, Chief
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Enclosure

cc: Kenneth Sutton
Gail Roberts
Kim C. Komisar
Patricia Howell
Vicki L. Eddy

**Duval County School District
Final Report: On-Site Monitoring
Exceptional Student Education Programs**

April 19–23, 2010

**Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
Florida Department of Education**

Duval County School District

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring Exceptional Student Education Programs April 19–23, 2010

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Duval County School District

On-Site Monitoring Exceptional Student Education Programs April 19–23, 2010

Final Report

Authority

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (Bureau), in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation, is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all laws and rules (sections 1001.03(8) and 1008.32, Florida Statutes [F.S.]). In fulfilling this requirement, the Bureau conducts monitoring activities of the exceptional student education (ESE) programs provided by district school boards, in accordance with sections 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and ESE programs; provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (section 300.1(d) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations [34 CFR §300.1(d)]). In accordance with IDEA, FDOE is responsible for ensuring that its requirements are carried out and that each educational program for children with disabilities administered in the state meets the educational requirements of the state (34 CFR §§300.120, 300.149, and 300.600). The monitoring system reflects FDOE's commitment to provide assistance, service, and accountability to school districts and is designed to emphasize improved educational outcomes for students while continuing to conduct those activities necessary to ensure compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

Monitoring Process

District Selection

For the 2009–10 school year, the Bureau's ESE monitoring system comprised basic (Level 1) and focused (Level 2) self-assessment activities, as well as on-site visits conducted by Bureau staff (Level 3). This system was developed to ensure that school districts comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and state statutes and rules, while focusing on improving student outcomes related to State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators.

All districts were required to complete Level 1 activities. In addition, those districts that were newly identified for targeted planning or activities by the Bureau SPP indicator teams for one or more selected SPP indicators were required to conduct Level 2 self-assessment activities using indicator-specific protocols. Districts selected for Level 3 monitoring conducted Level 1 and

Level 2 activities as applicable. Selection of districts for consideration for Level 3 monitoring was based on analysis of the districts' data, with the following criteria applied:

- Matrix of services:
 - Districts that report students for weighted funding at > 150 percent of the state rate for **at least one** of the following cost factors:
 - 254 (> 7.83 percent)
 - 255 (> 3.20 percent)
 - 254/255 combined (> 11.03 percent)
 - Districts that report students for weighted funding at > 125 percent of the state rate for **two or more** of the following cost factors:
 - 254 (> 6.53 percent)
 - 255 (> 2.66 percent)
 - 254/255 combined (> 9.19 percent)
- Timeliness of correction of noncompliance regarding corrective action(s) due between July 1, 2008, and June 30, 2009 – two or more of the following criteria:
 - Student-specific noncompliance identified through monitoring not corrected within 60 days
 - Systemic noncompliance identified through monitoring not corrected as soon as possible, but in no case longer than one year from identification
 - Noncompliance identified through a state complaint investigation or due process hearing not corrected within the established timeline
- Pattern of poor performance over time in one or more targeted SPP indicators, as evidenced by demonstrated progress below that of other targeted districts, **and** at least one of the following:
 - Targeted for a given SPP indicator or cluster of indicators for three consecutive years
 - Targeted for two or more SPP indicators or clusters of indicators for two consecutive years

SPP Indicator 2

In accordance with 34 CFR §300.157(a)(3), each state must have established goals in effect for students with disabilities that address dropout rate. Established performance indicators include SPP Indicator 2 relating to the percent of youth with individual education plans (IEPs) dropping out of high school. Since July 1, 2008, the Duval County School District has been implementing an improvement plan relating to SPP Indicators 1, 2, 13, and 14 (standard diploma, dropout rate, secondary transition, and postsecondary outcomes).

In a letter dated December 11, 2009, the Duval County School District superintendent was informed that the district was selected for a Level 3 on-site visit due to a pattern of poor performance over time regarding SPP Indicator 2. In addition, the district was targeted for SPP Indicator 2 for Level 2 Spring Cycle Self-Assessment. However, the Bureau determined that the needed information could be obtained in conjunction with the on-site monitoring visit and waived the requirement that the district complete the self-assessment.

The on-site visit provided an opportunity for Bureau staff members to observe some of the evidence-based practices in effect for dropout prevention. During the on-site visit, district staff members stated that they are implementing the following:

- Follow up on completed Transition Survey/Student Input forms:
 - Contact parents and discuss issues their child selected as an area(s) of concern
 - Meet with students in focus groups to discuss common issues
 - Meet with students and parents individually to discuss specifics of their area(s) of concern
 - Refer student and parents to appropriate school-based staff to determine appropriate placement to include: course of study, major area of interest, safety nets, and alternative education programs
 - Update IEP or hold an addendum meeting to address areas that need to be adjusted/addressed
 - Refer students, as needed, to Multidisciplinary Team to determine need for additional/updated testing, placement change, and/or functional behavioral assessment (FBA) initiation
- Monitor students' progress through attendance records, discipline records, grades, academic history, IEP goals and objectives, teacher input, parent input, and student input
- Monitor students' progress by house administrator, guidance counselor, teacher, parent, student, school resource officer, and district staff
- Follow up on Transition Survey/Student Input forms for students who did not complete the survey/input forms:
 - Social worker to locate students and discuss specific issues as necessary
 - Refer students to appropriate district staff and school-based staff to address areas of concern

On-Site Activities

Monitoring Team

On April 19–23, 2010, Bureau staff members conducted an on-site monitoring visit, which included meeting with district staff to discuss strategies in place to address dropout rate. The following Bureau staff members participated in the on-site visit:

- Vicki Eddy, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance (Team Leader)
- Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance
- Anne Bozik, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance
- Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance
- Annette Oliver, Program Specialist, Program Administration and Quality Assurance
- Joyce Lubbers, Program Director, Program Development and Services
- Sheila Gritz, Program Specialist, Program Development and Services
- Karlene Deware, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution
- Lindsey Granger, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution

Schools

The following schools were selected for an on-site visit based upon the percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school:

- Jean Ribault High School
- Edward H. White High School
- Nathan B. Forrest High School
- William M. Raines High School
- Andrew Jackson High School

- Robert E. Lee High School
- Paxon Middle School
- Lake Shore Middle School

Student Focus Groups

Student focus groups were conducted by Bureau staff at Jean Ribault High School, Andrew Jackson High School, and Lake Shore Middle School. A total of 16 students participated in a student focus group; these students were selected from a group of students whose records were reviewed at each of the school sites. Focus questions included the following topics:

- IEP Team Meetings and Transition Services
- Current ESE Services
- Extracurricular Activities
- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and Diploma Options
- Dropout
- Suspension and Expulsion
- Job Training
- College

The students who participated in the focus groups were aware of resources available in the school and district to assist them in pursuing their postsecondary goals.

Data Collection

Monitoring activities included the following:

- District-level interviews – 17 participants
- School-level administrators interviews – 25 participants
- Other school-level interviews – 43 participants
- Records reviewed – 48 students
- Case studies – 41 students

Review of Records

The district was asked to provide the following documents for each student selected for review:

- Current IEP
- FBA/behavioral intervention plan (BIP), if any
- Previous IEP
- Progress reports from current school year
- Report cards from current school year
- Discipline record from current school year
- Attendance record from current school year
- Schedule

Information from each document was used to determine compliance with those standards most likely to impact a student's decision to remain in school.

Results

The following results reflect the data collected through the activities of the on-site monitoring as well as commendations, concerns, recommendations, and findings of noncompliance.

Commendations

- The school environment at most of the schools visited was calm, welcoming, and orderly with an appearance of being well organized.
- The faculty and school staff members at each of the schools visited demonstrated a high level of professionalism and commitment to the students.
- All of the schools visited offered an inviting climate and provided a nurturing atmosphere that welcomes parental involvement.
- Students with disabilities who were observed demonstrated a positive attitude toward learning and actively participated in discussions in their general education classes.
- Each school visited had initiatives in place that offer support and identify students with disabilities who are at risk of dropping out of school.
- The schools visited focus on building relationships between staff members and students with disabilities who are at risk of dropping out.
- Staff members shared their willingness and commitment to be involved beyond a student's academic needs in order to help a student succeed and stay in school.
- At William M. Raines High School, recently initiated policies include: gentlemen tucking in their shirts, all students wearing identification (ID) tags, and the provision of clear backpacks for all students. As a result, discipline referrals and suspensions have since decreased.
- Students are encouraged to transition from pursuing a special diploma to pursuing a standard diploma, when appropriate.
- Community involvement, including local churches, has impacted students' lives in a positive manner.
- Mentoring programs are in place for students who are at risk of dropping out of school.
- Schools visited had Safety Net Programs in place that offer additional supports for students, such as Saturday school; after school tutoring; alternative education; Accelerated Learning Center (ALC) and Accelerated Learning Center-Credit Recovery Program (credit recovery); educational alternative programs, such as Graduation Initiative Program, dropout prevention programs, Compass Odyssey Program (grade recovery), and Read 180 (intensive reading program).
- Some of the schools visited have smaller learning communities with block scheduling where teachers operate as a team and are able to communicate with each other regarding student needs.
- Program offerings at some of the schools visited included: Criminal Justice, Health Sciences Academy, Military Science, Information Technology, International Baccalaureate, Early College Program, Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) Marine, Math and Science Academy, Engineering Academy, and Liberal Arts Academy.
- During the student focus group sessions, the students indicated awareness of their IEPs, postsecondary goals, and understanding regarding the commitment needed in order to achieve their goals.

- The ESE and general education teachers who were interviewed were well informed about the students' needs.
- At many of the schools visited, incentives are in place, such as rewards for attendance and for displaying appropriate behavior, for students who are at risk of dropping out of school.
- Middle school staff members are preparing students to be knowledgeable of their IEP team meetings, accommodations, the roles of different faculty and staff with regard to the students' ESE services, and the resources they need in working toward their postsecondary goals.
- Some of the schools visited offered more or different electives for students to choose from as well as a non-paid and paid community-based training.
- At the schools visited it was evident that strategies implemented to improve attendance and decrease suspension and expulsion rates are data-driven, with data monitored on a continual basis.
- Some of the schools reported that recently established initiatives had increased student participation in programs such as the Saturday school and extracurricular and nonacademic activities.
- The Full Service Schools that integrate social services with education in neighborhood schools are helping students to be more successful in school by reducing dropout rates, truancy, and conduct code violations.
- The high schools visited offer many diverse programs such as: High School/High Tech, Best Buddies, Special Diploma Option 2, and non-paid and paid community-based training.
- Edward H. White High School holds an assembly at the beginning of the final semester to set expectations for the remainder of the school year.
- At Edward H. White High School, participation in Saturday school, which includes American College Test (ACT) and the Standard Achievement Test (SAT) preparation as well as math and reading for FCAT, increased from zero to between 80 to 100 students. Although the students and families typically provide their own transportation, the school encourages students to ask if they need transportation; funding has been designated for this purpose.
- Dropout prevention initiatives begin at the middle school level.

Concerns

- Students with autism spectrum disorder at Nathan B. Forrest High School were being served in a self-contained setting located in the back of the building, which appears to offer little opportunity for peer interaction.
- Students who are required to take remediation courses, particularly in the upper grades, appear to have little opportunity to take high-interest classes such as wood shop, computers, auto mechanics, cosmetology, or culinary arts.
- Staff members and students at some of the high schools noted a need for more vocational classes and other high-interest electives.
- One of the intensive reading classes at Robert E. Lee High School was missing headsets that had been broken; therefore, the case study student and some of the other students in the class were not able to access their Read 180 and/or Fast Forward instruction via computer.
- Outdated terms, such as trainable mentally handicapped (TMH) and severely emotionally disturbed (SED), were used by some of the staff members and were included on a school brochure and poster.

- Some of the schools noted scheduling challenges in arranging for general education teachers to participate in the IEP team meetings.
- Some teachers described remediation initiatives that enable students to enroll in a required course without the necessary prerequisite skills, which they believed increased the likelihood of failure.

Recommendations

- Consider networking opportunities for schools that have demonstrated success in dropout prevention strategies with similar struggling schools.
- Consider adding career preparation, career experiences (non-paid), and paid employment via the career placement or supported employment course to the range of options at Andrew Jackson High School.
- Expand some of the diverse programs at Nathan B. Forrest High School and add additional opportunities for dual enrollment or participation in off-campus career and technical programs.
- Consider other effective scheduling options for the schools identified as demonstrating a pattern of poor performance, including:
 - Added structure (i.e., color-coded ID badges) for the lunch periods
 - Cross-curriculum course scheduling
 - Alternative scheduling, which would allow for consistent contact with teachers (to help reduce regression)
- Consider ways to address risk factors beginning at the elementary school level.
- Consider other ways to provide required remediation for Level 2 students in conjunction with additional strategies such as instruction through application (i.e., applied or integrated).
- Plan for ways to continue the effective dropout prevention initiatives in anticipation of funding decreases.

Findings of Noncompliance

Bureau staff identified noncompliance in three student records. In two of the student records, wording of the postsecondary goals was not measurable. Identifying information regarding those students was provided to the district prior to the dissemination of this report. Training subsequently was provided by the district to the school personnel who helped develop the two IEPs. The noncompliance was corrected by the district and validated by the Bureau.

For the third student, student-specific corrective action was required for alignment of the present level of academic and functional performance statement(s), the annual goals, and the services identified on the IEP. Identifying information regarding this student was provided to the district prior to the dissemination of this report. The student's IEP was amended on May 12, 2010, specifically addressing the present levels of performance for the social/emotional goal and consideration of factors for least restrictive environment. The correction of the noncompliance was validated by the Bureau.

Corrective Action

All corrective action required as a result of the on-site monitoring visit has been completed by the district and validated by the Bureau.

Technical Assistance

Specific information for technical assistance, support, and guidance to school districts regarding the percent of youths with IEPs dropping out of high school can be found in the *Exceptional Student Education Compliance Self-Assessment: Processes and Procedures Manual 2009–10*.

Bureau Contacts

The following is a partial list of Bureau staff available for technical assistance:

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**Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

Glossary of Acronyms

ACT	American College Test
ALC	Accelerated Learning Center
BIP	Behavioral intervention plan
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
ESE	Exceptional student education
FBA	Functional behavioral assessment
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
ID	Identification
IEP	Individual educational plan
ROTC	Reserve Officers Training Corps
SAT	Standard Achievement Test
SPP	State Performance Plan
SED	Severely emotionally disturbed
TMH	Trainable mentally handicapped



**Florida Department of Education
Dr. Eric J. Smith, Commissioner**

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