

**2013-14 Exceptional Student Education
Monitoring and Assistance
On-Site Visit Report**

**Polk County School District
April 7-10, 2014**



This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES), Division of Public Schools, Florida Department of Education, and is available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/e/mon-home.asp>. For information on available resources, contact the BEES Resource and Information Center (BRIC).

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November 17, 2014

Dr. Kathryn LeRoy, Superintendent
Polk County School District
1915 S. Floral Ave
Bartow, FL 33830

Dear Superintendent LeRoy:

We are pleased to provide you with the **2013-14 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Polk County School District**. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site monitoring visit to your school district on April 7-10, 2014. Those information sources included interviews with district and school staff, student-focus groups, student record reviews, **Local Educational Agency Profiles, Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment** and an action-planning and problem-solving process. This report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' (BEESS) website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

The 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those State Performance Plan indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for coordinated early intervening services and those indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities. Additionally, the process focuses on a shift from ESE compliance to outcomes to prepare all students for college and career readiness, which include: increasing standard diploma graduates; decreasing the number of students dropping out of school; increasing regular class placement; decreasing the need for seclusion and restraint; and eliminating disproportionality in eligibility identification and discipline.

The Polk County School District was selected for an on-site visit due to graduation and dropout rates for students with disabilities. The on-site visit was conducted by a state support team (SST) that included BEESS and discretionary project staff.

Ms. Diane Callaway-Taylor, director, ESE, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for the on-site visit and throughout the visit. In addition, the principals and other staff members at the schools visited welcomed the SST and demonstrated a commitment to the education of students in the school district.

Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Chief
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Superintendent LeRoy
November 17, 2014
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As part of the SST's visit, representatives from the school district's ESE department, the schools visited and other school district staff participated in a problem-solving and action-planning process. This group reviewed the school district's data collected prior to and during the on-site visit, and came to consensus on priority goals related to preparation for college and career readiness. Action plans, developed around barriers to goals, are being implemented by the ESE department with the assistance of designated discretionary project staff from the SST.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Polk County School District. If there are any questions regarding this report, please contact me at 850-245-0475 or via email at monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org.

Sincerely,

Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Chief
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Enclosure

cc: Diane Callaway-Taylor
Cathy Bishop
Judith White
Patricia Howell

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

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Authority

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), 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 exceptional student education (ESE) laws and rules (sections 1001.03(3), 1003.571 and 1008.32, Florida Statutes [F.S.]). One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (s. 300.1(d) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]). The bureau is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA and the educational requirements of the state are implemented (34 CFR §300.149(a)(1) and (2)).

In fulfilling this requirement, the bureau monitors ESE programs provided by district school boards in accordance with ss. 1001.42, 1003.57 and 1003.573, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the bureau examines records and ESE services, evaluates procedures, provides information and assistance to school districts and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. The monitoring system is designed to facilitate improved educational outcomes for students while ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

Under 34 CFR §300.646(b)(2), if a state identifies significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity in a local educational agency (LEA) with respect to the identification of children as children with disabilities, the identification of children in specific disability categories, the placement of children with disabilities in particular educational settings or the taking of disciplinary actions, the LEA must use the maximum amount (15 percent) of funds allowable for comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (CEIS) for children in the LEA, particularly, but not exclusively, for children in those groups that were significantly overidentified.

Section 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities, was created in July 2010, and established documentation, reporting and monitoring requirements for districts regarding the use of restraint and seclusion for students with disabilities. School districts were required to have policies and procedures that govern parent notification, incident reporting, data collection and monitoring of the use of restraint or seclusion for students with disabilities in place no later than January 31, 2011. In July 2011, s. 1003.573, F.S., was amended to require that the FDOE establish standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual or physical restraint and occurrences of seclusion. In September and October 2011, the standards established by the FDOE were provided to school districts and were included in the district's Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures (SP&P) document.

ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process

Background Information

The 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focused on those State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for CEIS and the following indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities:

- Indicator 1 – Graduation: Percentage of youth with individual educational plans (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma.
- Indicator 2 – Dropout: Percentage of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.
- Indicator 4 – Rates of suspension and expulsion:
 - A. Percentage of districts that have a significant discrepancy in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs.
 - B. Percentage of districts that have (a) a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days for children with IEPs; and (b) policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and support and procedural safeguards.
- Indicator 5 – Educational environments:
Percentage of children with IEPs ages 6 through 21:
 - A. Inside the regular class 80 percent or more of the day;
 - B. Inside the regular class less than 40 percent of the day; and
 - C. In separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound/hospital placements.
- Indicator 10 – Disproportionality, specific disability categories: Percentage of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.
- CEIS – Services provided to students in kindergarten through grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through grade three) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment.
- Restraint – Rate of incidents of restraint, as reported in the FDOE website.
- Seclusion – Rate of incidents of seclusion, as reported in the FDOE website.

The 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process included four phases:

- Phase 1 was composed of planning activities that occurred in advance of the first on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 included the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST).
- Phase 3 included follow-up and post-initial visit activities conducted by a designated follow-up team, as determined by the SST, and identification of the ongoing data that will be collected.
- Phase 4 includes evaluation of the effectiveness of the school district's action plan, and should include participation of the comprehensive team that was involved in Phase 1.

For ESE compliance monitoring purposes, the bureau required all school districts to participate in the 2013-14 Level I Fall Cycle Self-Assessment process, which included the review of records for implementation of IEPs and a review of incidents of restraint and seclusion. School districts identified as part of the monitoring and assistance process with on-site visits during the 2013-14 school year were exempt from self-assessing school records for IEP implementation and

restraint and seclusion. Instead, bureau members of the school district's SST reviewed a sample of records as part of the on-site visit.

In a letter dated August 27, 2013, the superintendent of the Polk County School District was informed that the bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: graduation and dropout rates for students with disabilities.

School Selection

Upon review of the school district's data reported via the FDOE's web-based reporting systems for graduation and drop-out, and additional data provided by the school district, it was determined that the monitoring and assistance process would involve the following schools and programs for record reviews, school-level administrator interviews or on-site visits:

- Auburndale High School
- Kathleen High School
- Kathleen Middle School
- Stambaugh Middle School
- Age 18-22 programs

On-Site Activities

SST – On-Site Visit Team

The following SST members conducted the monitoring and assistance on-site visit:

FDOE, BEESS

- Judith White, secondary transition specialist (facilitator)
- Amelia Faith Bowman, program specialist (co-facilitator)

FDOE/BEESS Discretionary Projects

- Dr. Amber Brundage, post-doctoral research scholar, Florida's Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project (PS/Rtl) Project (action-planning and problem-solving co-facilitator)
- Dr. Stephanie Martinez, technical assistance specialist, Florida's Positive Behavior Support (FLPBS) Project (action-planning and problem-solving co-facilitator)
- Teresa DiBiasio, school improvement specialist, FDOE Office of Differentiated Accountability
- Bonnie Dupuis, regional facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
- Randy LaRusso, project manager, Access to the Florida Standards (ACCESS) Project
- Amy Looker, Region 14 Contact, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Heather Mack, learning and development facilitator, regional transition representative, Project 10: Transition Education Network
- Danielle Roberts-Dahm, assistant director, Project 10: Transition Education Network
- Dr. Poinsetta Tillman, senior manager, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) Sunrise
- Jami Yost, FDLRS Sunrise

Data Collection

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Student focus groups and interviews – 21 participants
- Teacher focus group and interviews – 39 participants
- 18-22 program walk-through observations – three programs
- Completion of seclusion rooms inspection checklist – four rooms
- Completion of Restraint and Seclusion protocol – five students
- Completion of IEP Implementation protocol – 10 students
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – 31 participants
- Review of data from the school district's LEA Profiles, Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment and data compiled from district data systems

Review of Records

The school district was asked to provide the following documents, as applicable, for each of the 15 students selected for review of restraint or seclusion or IEP implementation:

- IEPs for the 2012-13 and the 2013-14 school years
- Current functional behavioral assessment
- Current behavioral intervention plan (BIP)
- Discipline and attendance records for 2013-14 school year
- Progress reports and report cards (current and previous year)
- Student's current schedule
- Parent notifications and other documentation related to incidents of restraint and seclusion
- Verification of training for staff members involved in incidents of restraint or seclusion
- Verification of the provision of related services and accommodations (e.g., lesson plans, teacher schedules and therapy logs)

Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

Prior to the on-site visit, the school district was provided with questions to use as a guide in the collection of data. SST and district staff reviewed these data during the action-planning and problem-solving process. Polk County School District's questions were related to graduation and dropout rates. A list of these questions is located in Appendix A of this report.

Results

The following results reflect the data collected and reviewed through the activities of the 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process for Polk County School District. Also included are commendations, records review findings and next steps, as applicable.

Data regarding enrollment group are reported for Florida districts classified as large, which include Brevard, Collier, Escambia, Lake, Lee, Manatee, Marion, Osceola, Pasco, Polk, Sarasota, Seminole and Volusia.

Graduation Data Review

Federal Uniform High School Graduation Rate:

Beginning with the 2010-11 school year, the U.S. Department of Education adopted a new graduation rate calculation. This calculation uses the number of first-time ninth graders from four years ago, plus incoming transfer students on the same schedule to graduate, minus students from this population who transferred out or left to enroll in a private school or home education divided into the number of standard diploma graduates (does not include Department of Juvenile Justice students who are not standard diploma recipients) from the same group. The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities and all students.

Students with Disabilities	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Polk	38%	36%	43%
Enrollment Group	43%	47%	51%
State	44%	48%	52%

All Students	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Polk	66%	67%	69%
Enrollment Group	71%	75%	76%
State	71%	74%	76%

Source: 2014 LEA Profile - FDOE (<http://www.fldoe.org/ease/datapage.asp>)

Standard Diploma Graduation Rate:

The number of standard diploma graduates divided by the number of students with disabilities who completed their education (received either a standard diploma, GED®, special diploma, certificate of completion or special certificate of completion) or dropped out. This graduation rate is calculated based on the total number of students with disabilities who exited school in a given year, rather than using the four-year cohort model described in the No Child Left Behind graduation rate.

Standard Diploma Graduation Rate for Students with Disabilities	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Polk	35%	41%	35%	41%
Enrollment Group	50%	52%	52%	59%
State	53%	54%	52%	58%

Source: 2014 LEA Profile - FDOE (<http://www.fldoe.org/ease/datapage.asp>)

Dropout Data Review

The Florida dropout rate consists of the number of students in grades 9-12 for whom a dropout withdrawal reason was reported, divided by the total enrollment of grades 9-12 students and students who did not enter school as expected as reported at the end of the school year. The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities and all students.

Students with Disabilities	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Polk	8%	8%	10%	11%
Enrollment Group	4%	4%	3%	3%
State	4%	4%	3%	4%

All Students	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Polk	4%	4%	5%	6%
Enrollment Group	2%	2%	2%	2%
State	2%	2%	2%	2%

EdFacts*Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
36.6%	44%	41%

*EdFacts refers to the secure transmission of data submitted by states to the U.S. Department of Education to meet federal reporting requirements. In the exit data submission under IDEA Part B, Florida submits data about all students with disabilities ages 14 through 21 who exited the school system during a school year. Data are submitted in the following categories

- GHS = Graduated with regular high school diploma
- RC = Received a certificate (includes special diplomas, certificate of completion and special certificate of completion)
- D = Died
- MKC = Moved, known to be continuing their education
- DROPOUT = Dropped out
- TRAN = Transferred to regular education

In order to calculate the dropout rate using EdFacts data, the following calculation is performed.

Number of students in DROPOUT category divided by number of students reported as GHS, RC, DROPOUT or D.

Student Focus Groups

Student focus groups were conducted at two high schools during the monitoring and assistance on-site visit. Student views were collected on the following topics: perception of their school, support to meet graduation requirements, options for academics, career and technical education and reasons for dropout. Twenty-one students participated in the student focus groups with twelve of these being general education students and nine of these being students identified with disabilities. Samples of student responses to the topics follow:

- Perception of their school
 - General education students indicated that the schools offered many options for success that each student was personally responsible to access.
 - Students identified with disabilities indicated positive feelings about their schools and the activities.
- Support to meet graduation requirements
 - General education students noted several activities, credit options and adults with high expectations that supported meeting graduation requirements.
 - Students identified with disabilities reported specific adults who supported them individually to help meet graduation requirements.
- Options for academics, career and technical education
 - General education students referenced many options regarding classes, clubs and information sources regarding college and career.
 - Students identified with disabilities indicated knowledge about career academies available, but few indicated participation in the academies.
- Reasons for dropout
 - General education students reported former classmates with family and financial reasons for dropout.
 - Students identified with disabilities indicated former classmates had academic difficulties and excessive absences due to skipping classes, which caused dropout. One student also noted a drop-back-in program that an acquaintance had used successfully.

Teacher Focus Groups

Teacher focus groups were conducted at two high schools and two middle schools during the monitoring and assistance on-site visit. Teacher views were collected on the following topics: environmental systems, instructional systems, behavioral systems and graduation. Thirty-nine teachers participated in the student focus groups with twenty of these being general education teachers and nineteen of these being ESE teachers. Summaries of teacher responses to the topics follow:

- Environmental systems
 - General education teachers indicated the use of classroom routines, relationship-building strategies, motivational activities and positive reinforcement to support positive school climates.
 - ESE teachers reported the use of respectful student-teacher interactions, frequent parental contact, implementation of behavior intervention plans, mentoring of students and making efforts toward inclusion to support positive schools climates.
- Instructional systems
 - General education teachers reported use of a co-teaching model in some courses, providing student accommodations, having IEPs and accommodation tracking sheets provided by ESE teachers, providing ESE students with access to ESE support labs or accommodations rooms and providing standards-based instruction.

- ESE teachers stated that they used strategies including collaboration, scaffolding, one-on-one tutoring and differentiation in different models along the continuum based on student needs. The majority of ESE teachers responded that general education teachers instruct standards for students in inclusion classes, and ESE teachers instruct standards in self-contained classes.
- Behavioral systems
 - General education teachers reported using school wide positive behavioral system expectations with reinforcers, addressing social skills through literature discussions and proactively monitoring hallway behaviors during transitions between classes.
 - ESE teachers noted the use of visual supports, verbal de-escalation and school wide positive behavioral systems with rewards. Some teachers stated that mental health services were provided per student needs on IEPs.
- Graduation
 - General education teachers reported the use of scholars programs, summer school, Florida Virtual classes, Edgenuity (E 20-20) credit recovery and expectations by grade level for on-track graduation. The teachers also reported that some students did not graduate as they missed weeks of school due to seasonal agricultural employment.
 - ESE teachers reported use of E20-20 credit recovery, support of guidance counselors, parent notification and Saturday sessions to support graduation. Some teachers reported that meeting graduation requirements takes some students longer than four years.

Commendations

1. The school district increased its federal uniform graduation rate for students with disabilities 6.1 percent in one year, from 36.45 percent in 2011-2012 to 42.55 percent in 2012-2013.
2. The district offers a variety of extended programs for 18 to 22-year-old students. Those visited appeared to meet most all of the evidence-based framework for 18+ community - based programs requirements outlined by Mitchell-Panter Consulting (revised 2012).

ESE Monitoring and Compliance

Records Review Commendation

Bureau staff reviewed records of 15 students in the school district, from a sampling of six schools. Standards from the IEP Implementation and Restraint and Seclusion protocols were reviewed. No findings of noncompliance were noted in any of these records. This is an area of commendation for the district.

Problem-Solving Process with Action-Planning and Next Steps

As part of the monitoring and assistance on-site visit, the SST members, ESE director and representatives from the Polk County School District participated in an eight-step problem-solving and action-planning process. The group reviewed the data collected prior to and during the on-site visit and developed a list of priorities and obstacles. Action plans were developed to address the first priority selected, which was related to reducing the dropout rate and increasing the graduation rate for the general student population.

The school district set goals of desired outcomes for actions as follow:

- Increase graduation rate from 67.46 percent (2011-12) to 76 percent (3 Percent growth/per year) by 2017-2018 (matches District 5 year Strategic Plan).
- Decrease dropout rate from 5.3 percent (2011-12) to 2.6 percent (using 9-12 SY Drop-out calculation) by 2017-2018 (matches District 5 year Strategic Plan).
- Increase graduation rate for students identified with disabilities from 42.79 percent (2011-12) to 57.79 percent by 2017-2018.
- Decrease drop-out rate from 10.4 percent (11-12) for students identified with disabilities to at or below the state rate based on the SSP by 2017-2018.

During the problem - solving process, the district and SST worked to identify and select barriers to the goals, and plan for future actions as follows:

- Regarding multi-tiered system of support (MTSS).
 - o Barriers: varied understanding of MTSS regarding academics and behavior, lack of preventative systems at some schools
 - o Action plan: determine the district’s utilization of a specific MTSS model with a defined ESE role and the level of implementation for each school site
- Regarding data needs
 - o Barriers: inconsistent coding across district and inconsistent use of data of the early warning system
 - o Action plan: identification of sources of data and identification of the availability of data for analysis
- Regarding ESE:
 - o Barriers: lack of knowledge of laws and statutes in relation to ESE
 - o Action plan: professional development regarding ESE, inclusion of ESE representatives on district and school teams

Next Steps	
Graduation and Dropout Rates	
Summary:	Based on 2012-13 data, the district performed at a much lower rate than the state average, which was 57.9% for standard diploma graduation rate and 20.3% for ED Facts dropout rate. At 41%, the district had the lowest standard diploma graduation rate and, also at 41%, the highest dropout rate for students with disabilities in their comparison group.
Required Action:	Recent legislative changes in Florida that allow all students to earn a standard diploma, combined with a better-prepared 2014-15 9 th grade cohort, should assist in the efforts to improve these results. It is imperative that the district ensure that current 9 th grade students are enrolled in courses that will contribute to their graduation success. Students on access points should be enrolled in access or higher level courses and other students with IEPs should be enrolled in general education courses. The district will review course enrollments for all students with disabilities in 9 th grade and provide a report to BEESS by December 1, 2014. The district should seek support from the BEESS, the problem-solving facilitator and discretionary projects to address these issues. The

Next Steps	
	<p>district must choose one or more evidence-based practices to lower the dropout rate and increase the standard diploma graduation rate and implement these practices with fidelity.</p> <p>The district will provide quarterly progress reports to the bureau chief, the first of which must be delivered by December 1, 2014.</p>
Provision of ESE services and supports in the general education environment	
Summary:	<p>The middle schools visited had very different methods of providing ESE services and supports in the general education environment.</p> <p>First middle school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General education teachers were not very familiar with the students' IEPs • ESE teachers followed the students and felt there was no time to collaborate with the general education teachers. • School counselor was not part of the ESE team • Appeared to be limited understanding of positive behavior support • Emphasis was on extraneous barriers <p>Second middle school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General education and ESE teachers were a coordinated team and weekly progress reporting took place • ESE teachers were assigned to work with subject area teachers and become experts in that area • School counselor part of the ESE team • Positive behavior support knowledge high • Preventative processes in place
Recommendation:	District and schools should review their methods of providing ESE services and supports in the general education environment and examine student progression data to make an evidence-based decision on which method is most effective.
Required Action:	None
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process	
Summary	<p>Ongoing support for the school district in regard to graduation and dropout rates for students with disabilities will be scheduled by the problem-solving facilitator and discretionary projects.</p> <p>By April 2015, the SST team, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan(s) and determine additional next steps, as appropriate.</p>

Technical Assistance

1. **Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders** (Florida's PBS Project) may be accessed at http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/RTIB%20Guide%20101811_final.pdf and provides an overview of the critical components of an MTSS for behavior. These critical components describe systems changes that are necessary for a results-driven ESE system.
2. The district's **ESE Policies and Procedures** document provides district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual, physical or mechanical restraint and seclusion developed by the FDOE. The school district's document for the 2013-14 through 2015-16 school years may be accessed at <http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
3. The technical assistance paper entitled **Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Restraint and Seclusion with Students with Disabilities**, dated October 14, 2011, may be accessed at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-6212/dps-2011-165.pdf>. This document provides guidance regarding the use, documenting, reporting and monitoring of restraint and seclusion with students with disabilities in school districts, including (a) when restraint or seclusion might be used, (b) considerations when selecting a training program for restraint, (c) what should be documented, (d) parent notification and reporting, and (e) monitoring use. It also contains information about s. 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities.
4. According to s. 1003.57, F.S., once every three years, each school district and school shall complete a Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) assessment with a FIN facilitator and include the results of the BPIE assessment and all planned short-term and long-term improvement efforts in the school district's SP&P. BPIE is an internal assessment process designed to facilitate the analysis, implementation and improvement of inclusive educational practices at the district and school team levels.
A FIN facilitator is available to assist the school district in scheduling and completing the BPIE, and based on the results, will identify how FIN can provide support to the school district (<http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/>).
5. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released **School Discipline Guidance** in the January 2014, Volume 4, Issue 1 of the **Office of Special Education Programs Monthly Update**. This package will assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. The resource documents listed below are included in the package, and are available at <http://www.ed.gov/school-discipline>:
 - **Dear Colleague** guidance letter on civil rights and discipline;
 - **Guiding Principles** document that draws from emerging research and best practices;
 - **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources** that indexes federal technical assistance and other resources; and
 - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations** that catalogue State laws and regulations related to school discipline.

6. Project 10: Transition Education Network is available to assist Florida school districts in building capacity to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and post-school outcomes. Project 10 serves as the primary conduit in addressing law and policy, effective practices and research-based interventions in the area of transition services for youth with disabilities.
(<http://www.project10.info/>)
7. The district's **ESE Policies and Procedures** document provides district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual, physical or mechanical restraint and seclusion developed by the FDOE. The school district's document for the 2013-14 through 2015-16 school years may be accessed at <http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
8. The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) provides technical assistance and disseminates information on evidence-based practices leading to improved academic and functional achievement for students with disabilities, including lowering dropout rates and increasing graduation rates, preparing them for college or other postsecondary education and training and the workforce. NTACC resources can be accessed at <http://nsttac.org/>.
9. The National Dropout Prevention Center for Student with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) provides high-quality, evidence-based technical assistance to build and implement sustainable programs and best practices that will yield positive results in dropout prevention, reentry, and school completion. NDPC-SD resources can be accessed at <http://www.ndpc-sd.org/>.
10. The Florida Division on Career Development and Transition, in partnership with BEESS and NSTTAC, sponsor a yearly VISIONS conference/NSTTAC Institute. BEESS provides financial assistance for district teams to attend this conference/institute, which focuses on evidence-based practices and provides facilitated transition team planning activities.
11. Evidence-based Framework for 18+Community-based Services, Revised 2013 is a product of MP Consulting, LLC, a national consulting firm that provides professional development, program evaluations and technical assistance related to Special Education. Consultants work with school districts, state education resource and service centers, postsecondary education institutions, state agencies, community service providers, students with disabilities and their families. MP Consulting can be accessed at <http://www.mitchellpanter.com>.

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

2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance

State Support Team for Polk County School District

**Bureau of Exceptional Education and
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FLDOE Discretionary Projects

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Appendix A

Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

Appendix A: Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

1. What are the most current data levels on each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
2. What is the gap between BEESS expected level(s) of targeted indicators and your district's current level(s) of targeted indicators?
3. Do data indicate equity issues related to the selected BEESS indicators? Are there subgroups for which the gap between expected and goal levels of performance and current levels of performance is more or less significant?
 - Gender
 - Race or ethnic group
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - Students with disabilities (by each sub-group)
 - English language learners
 - Comparison within and across above sub-groups
4. Disaggregate district-level indicator data to school levels. Which schools are contributing to total district frequency for each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
5. Disaggregate school-level indicator data by grade level. Which grades within each school are contributing to total school frequency for each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
6. Disaggregate between type of school (elementary, middle school and high school) by student outcomes.
7. How many (number and percentage) high school students at each grade/level are chronically absent (21 or more days) per year?
8. What are the chronic absence rates (21 or more days per year) for:
 - Students with disabilities
 - Race or ethnic group
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - English language learners
9. How many high school (numbers and percentage) students at each grade level have a GPA less than 2.0?
10. How many students at each grade level have GPA less than 2.0 in the following categories:
 - Students with disabilities
 - Race or ethnic groups
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - English language learners
11. How many (number and percentage) high school students at each grade level are failing one or more courses?
12. How many high school students at each grade level are failing 1 or more courses in the following categories:
 - Students with disabilities
 - Race or ethnic group
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - English language learners
13. How many courses/classes at each high school have 20% or greater failure rates?
14. How many (number and percentage) high school students at each grade level have insufficient credit accrual for their grade/cohort level?

15. How many (number and percentage) high school students at each grade level have insufficient credit accrual for their grade/cohort level?
 - Students with disabilities
 - Race or ethnic group
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - English language learners
16. What is the rate of discipline referrals (ODRS and Suspensions) per 100 students at each grade level in high school?
17. What is the rate of discipline referrals (ODRs and Suspensions) per 100 students at each grade level in high school in the following categories:
 - Students with disabilities
 - Chronically absent students
 - Race or ethnic groups
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - English language learners
18. What systems are in place to monitor student attendance, GPA, course failures and credit accrual (e.g. Early Warning Systems, etc.)?
 - How frequently can the data be accessed
 - Who has access to these data
19. What evidence-based practices should be occurring at the school level specific to BEESS indicators being targeted for improvement?
20. Are the expected evidence-based practices occurring sufficiently?
21. If expected evidence-based practices are not occurring or not occurring sufficiently, why not? (What are some potential barriers specific to targeted BEESS Indicators at the school level?)
22. How are school level evidence-based practices being supported by the district specific, to BEESS indicators being targeted for improvement?
23. Are district supports for school level practices being provided sufficiently?
24. If district supports are not occurring or not occurring sufficiently, why not? (What are some potential barriers specific to targeted BEESS Indicators at the district level?)
25. What strategies, initiatives, and resources have been identified in the DIAP with regard to achieving AMO targets for students with disabilities?
26. As applicable, has the mid-year reflection based on mid-year assessment data been completed and what, if any, adjustments have been made to the DIAP with regard to strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities?
27. What does the ESE Policies and Procedures document reflect with regard to the district's goal to improve targeted indicator performance? Did the district achieve the goal set during the prior year?
28. What is occurring with regard to implementing the strategies in the ESE Policies and Procedures document with regard to targeted indicator performance?
29. Based on all of the above answers, what priorities will be targeted to improve BEESS targeted indicators?

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

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following is a list of acronyms, abbreviations and terms used within this report.

BEESS	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BIP	Behavioral intervention plan
BPIE	Best Practices for Inclusive Education
BRIC	BEESS Resource and Information Center
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CEIS	Coordinated early intervening services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DA	Differentiated Accountability
EBD	Emotional or behavioral disability
ESE	Exceptional student education
FCAT 2.0	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test 2.0
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
ISS	In-school-suspension
LEA	Local educational agency
MTSS	Multi-tiered system of support
OSS	Out-of-school suspension
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PBS/MTSS	Positive Behavior Support/Multi-tiered System of Supports
PS/Rtl	Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention
PLC	Professional learning community
Rtl	Response to intervention
SP&P	Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures
SPP	State Performance Plan
SST	State Support Team
USF	University of South Florida



Pam Stewart, Commissioner

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