**2018-19 Exceptional Student Education
On-Site Monitoring Report**

**Miami-Dade County School District
October 29-30, 2018**

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
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This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), Division of K-12 Public Schools, Florida Department of Education (FDOE), and is available online at http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp. For information on available resources, contact the BEESS Resource and Information Center (BRIC).

BRIC website: http://www.fldoe.org/ese/clerhome.asp
BEESS website: http://www.fldoe.org/ese/
Email: BRIC@fldoe.org
Telephone: 850-245-0475
Fax: 850-245-0987

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 (sections 1003.01(3), 1003.571 and 1008.32, Florida Statutes [F.S.]) and rules. 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]). BEESS 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, BEESS 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, BEESS 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 who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic or behavioral supports in order to succeed in a general education environment. These children should include particularly, but not exclusively, children in those groups that were significantly overidentified.

Section 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities, establishes documentation, reporting and monitoring requirements for districts regarding the use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities. It also requires districts to have policies and procedures in place that govern parent notification, incident reporting, data collection and monitoring the use of restraint or seclusion for students with disabilities. As required, the FDOE has established district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of restraint and seclusion. These standards are included in each district's Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures document.

ESE On-Site Monitoring Process

Background Information

The 2018-19 ESE On-Site Monitoring process focuses on those State Performance Plan 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 more 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 rates of suspensions and expulsions of more 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 aged 6 through 21:
  A. In the regular class 80 percent or more of the day;
  B. In the regular class less than 40 percent of the day; and
  C. In separate schools, residential facilities or homebound or 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 for students in kindergarten through grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through grade 3) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in a general education environment.
- Restraint – Rate of incidents of restraint, as reported in the FDOE database.
- Seclusion – Rate of incidents of seclusion, as reported in the FDOE database.

The ESE On-Site Monitoring process includes four phases:
- Phase 1 is composed of planning activities that occur in advance of the initial on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 is the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST). The SST consists of BEESS staff, peer monitors from other districts and discretionary project staff. The SST assists with facilitating focus groups at each school site that may consist of administrators, teachers, students and parents.
- Phase 3 is follow-up activities, which are conducted by a designated follow-up team, as determined by the SST, and identification of the ongoing data that will be collected.
- Phase 4 is evaluation of the effectiveness of how the district is addressing each of the focus areas, and should include participation of the action-planning and problem-solving process team.

In a letter dated August 13, the superintendent of the Miami-Dade County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for least restrictive environment (LRE).

School Selection

Upon review of the school district's data, it was determined that the on-site monitoring process would involve all of the following schools for school administrator and teacher focus groups, and some schools for parent and student focus groups:

- Sweetwater Elementary School
- José de Diego Middle School

- North Miami Middle School
- Miami Central Senior High School
- Miami Southridge Senior High School
- Leisure City K-8 Center School

2018-19 ESE On-Site Monitoring Focus Area

The following data are related to the focus area and activities for the 2018-19 ESE On-Site Monitoring for the Miami-Dade County School District.

Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)

To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are to be educated with students without disabilities. These LRE data are calculated by dividing the number of students with disabilities aged 6 through 21 served in the regular class for 80 percent or more of the day, by the total number of students with disabilities aged 6 through 21 reported in October (survey 2). These data do not include parentally placed private school students or students served in Florida county jails, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice facilities or Florida Department of Corrections. The district's percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class increased from 49.6 percent during the 2015-16 school year to 49.7 percent during the 2016-17 school year. The 2017-18 LRE rate increased to 54.5 percent, which is below the state target of 83.0 percent.

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Miami-Dade	49.6%	49.7%	54.5%
State Target	79.0%	82.0%	83.0%

Interviews Conducted

Administrator Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with administrators from Sweetwater Elementary School, José de Diego Middle School, North Miami Middle School, Miami Central Senior High School, Miami Southridge Senior High School and Leisure City K-8 Center School regarding LRE.

Themes that emerged from these focus groups included the following:
- The district is increasing the frequency of inclusive practices using support facilitation and co-teaching.
- There is an increase in the number of transition meetings from feeder schools to maintain implementation of IEPs.
- There is a need to revisit allocations in the context of inclusion, as a decrease in enrollment in settings such as resource can cause a decrease in allocations. This change can result in the elimination of co-teaching.
- There are concerns about hiring and retaining ESE teachers.
- There is a need to create hands-on, job-embedded training for teachers and a toolkit that includes multiple tiers of instruction and intervention options.
- Students with disabilities are included in all extra-curricular activities.

Teacher Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with teachers from Sweetwater Elementary School, José de Diego Middle School, North Miami Middle School, Miami Central Senior High School, Miami Southridge Senior High School and Leisure City K-8 Center School regarding LRE.

Themes that emerged from these focus groups included the following:
- There is interest in learning new ways to do inclusion and a need for opportunities for hands-on, job-embedded professional learning at school sites, such as modeling, coaching and visiting model classrooms.
- There are concerns with funding and an increase in class size when students with disabilities are included.
- Parent workshops are needed to convey that when discussing inclusion, special education is a service and not a place.
- There is a need for increased opportunities for common planning between ESE and general education teachers.
- Students with disabilities are included in extra-curricular activities and field trips.

Parent Focus Group

Members of the SST conducted a focus group with parents of students with disabilities aged 14 years or older.

Themes that emerged from the focus group included the following:
- Parent liaisons are available to assist parents.
- The district should reach out to the community to provide opportunities to learn about ESE services.
- One parent felt that the district needs a better understanding of the perception of special education in each represented culture.

Student Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with students from José de Diego Middle School, North Miami Middle School, Miami Central Senior High School and Miami Southridge Senior High School. Students were asked to share their perspectives on topics such as graduation, dropout and postsecondary activities.

Comments from these focus groups included the following:
- Students feel they have support at their school sites.
- Students know if they are on track to graduate and are aware of postsecondary goals.
- Students feel that they have to earn their way into inclusion and are concerned they will not do well enough to be included.
- All students have the opportunity to participate in sports and other extra-curricular activities.

Commendations

1. The district's federal cohort graduation rate for students with disabilities increased from 70.3 percent in 2016-17 to 79.7 percent in 2017-18, which is above the state target of 62.3 percent.
2. The district's standard diploma rate for students with disabilities increased from 63.6 percent in 2016-17 to 69.2 percent in 2017-18.
3. The district's number of incidents of restraints for students with disabilities decreased 11.9 percent from 126 incidents in 2016-17 to 111 incidents in 2017-18.

2018-19 Next Steps

Least Restrictive Environment	
Summary	The percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class remained the same at approximately 50.0 percent during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. The 2017-18 LRE rate increased to 54.5 percent, which is below the state target of 83.0 percent.
Recommendations	The district should follow through with planned actions from the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN), Project 10, the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System, and the Florida Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Project to support the district with implementation of LRE.
Required Actions	The district must report quarterly on the monthly meetings held with the inclusion team and the district leadership team regarding the data analysis for Indicator 5a as indicated in the district's Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE). Quarterly reports will be due on **March 27, June 19, September 25, and December 18, 2019**.
	The district must report quarterly on coordinated FIN visits to school sites to provide professional development regarding master scheduling as indicated in the district's BPIE. The report must indicate which schools have participated and when additional schools are scheduled for training. Quarterly reports will be due on **March 27, June 19, September 25, and December 18, 2019**.
	The quarterly reports due on **March 27, June 19, September 25, and December 18, 2019** must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org.
Follow up to the ESE Monitoring Visit	
Summary	The Miami-Dade County School District was selected for an on-site visit for LRE.

Required Actions	By **January 30, 2020**, designated BEESS staff and members of the district problem-solving team will reconvene via a conference call to share how the district is addressing the above-mentioned focus area and determine next steps. The district will coordinate with BEESS regarding the date and time of the conference call and provide documentation (e.g., recent data, professional development, problem-solving notes and action plans) via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by **December 20, 2019**.

Technical Assistance

1. **Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders** (Florida Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Project: MTSS [FLPBIS:MTSS]) may be accessed at https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/pbisresources/RTIB_Guide_101811_final.pdf. FLPBIS:MTSS 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 **Exceptional Student Education 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 2015-16 through 2017-18 school years may be accessed at http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx.

3. The FDOE's technical assistance paper DPS: 2016-13, entitled, "**Least Restrictive Environment Considerations Related to Individual Educational Plans**," dated January 15, 2016, may be accessed at https://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7540/dps-201613.pdf. This document provides guidance on the provision of services for students with disabilities in the LRE.

4. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released **School Discipline Guidance** in 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 following resource documents 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, which draws from emerging research and best practices;
   - **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources**, which indexes federal technical assistance and other resources; and
   - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations**, which catalogs state laws and regulations related to school discipline.

5. The **Project 10: Transition Education Network** may be accessed at http://project10.info. Project 10 assists Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and postsecondary outcomes. Project 10 serves as the primary conduit between BEESS and school-district personnel in addressing law and policy, effective practices, and research-based interventions in the area of transition services for youth with disabilities. The project also supports transition initiatives developed through the BEESS Strategic Plan. Examples of assistance provided related to graduation rates include using school-level data for graduation success, technical assistance to improve data collection, analysis and data-driven decision making, in order to develop a color-coded student graduation tracking system that can be coordinated with existing initiatives or systems. Regarding dropout, Project 10 supports dropout prevention strategies for students with disabilities, school-based enterprise, service learning and early warning system.

6. The **Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) Associate Centers Support** may be accessed at http://www.fdlrs.org. The 19 FDLRS associate centers provide an array of instructional and technical support services to school districts statewide. The four central functions of each FDLRS center are Child Find, parent services, human resource development, and professional learning and technology. The centers collaborate with districts, agency and support personnel, communities, families, and educational personnel providing support services for educators, school administrators, parents, and students with disabilities. Examples of professional development related to graduation rates include Florida standards and access points, differentiated instruction, access to the general curriculum, Strategic Instruction Model™, behavior and discipline, Standing up for Me, self-advocacy, responsive classroom, and district-specific supports. Professional development related to dropout include differentiated instruction, accommodations, Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, and Success (known as CHAMPS), Tough Kids, discipline in the secondary classroom, support for parent involvement, Professional Development Alternatives for Positive Behavior Support module, universal design for learning, small-group planning and problem solving, disability awareness, and district-specific supports.

7. The **Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)** may be accessed at http://www.floridainclusion network.com/. FIN collaborates with all districts and schools to provide customized services and supports to ensure that students with disabilities have the same educational, social and future opportunities as their peers. In partnership with districts and schools, FIN facilitates implementation of best practices for inclusive education through data-driven, student-focused problem solving across districts and schools. In addition, FIN facilitates implementation of professional development and provides technical assistance and resources to district and school personnel in order to increase knowledge and skills to build and sustain capacity.

8. The **Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Project (PS/RtI) Technology** may be accessed at http://www.floridarti.usf.edu/index.html. One function of this project is to provide support to regional technology coordinators and technology specialists to effectively implement accessible instructional materials, assistive technologies, learning technologies and universal design for learning principles within all tiers of instruction. This project also manages, coordinates and supports the regional assistive technology loan libraries.

9. The **Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)** may be accessed at http://www.sednetfl.info/. The 19 regional SEDNET centers assist Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide the necessary mental health and academic supports to students with or at risk of emotional and behavioral disabilities to prepare students to achieve academic success; graduate high school; and become college, career and life ready.

10. The **PS/RtI – Technology and Learning Connections** (TLC) may be accessed at http://www.tlc-mtss.com. TLC provides guidelines and resources to support the implementation of universal design for learning. A quarterly newsletter that focuses on technology integration to support the local development of highly effective classrooms for all students may also be accessed. TLC's winter 2016-17 newsletter focused on math instruction, resources and tools to eliminate barriers and increase achievement for all students and can be viewed at http://conta.cc/2kjsuGt. To sign up to receive this quarterly newsletter, go to http://bit.ly/1TLoHLQ. Additional resources are available at https://www.tlc-mtss.com/resources.

11. The **Center for Autism and Related Disabilities** may be accessed at http://florida-card.org. The seven regional autism centers provide nonresidential resource and training services for persons of all ages and of all levels of intellectual functioning who have autism, a pervasive developmental disorder, an autistic-like disability, a dual sensory impairment, or a sensory impairment with other disabling conditions. Each center provides services within its geographical region of the state and service delivery is consistent for all centers and each center coordinates services within and between state and local agencies and school districts.

12. The **Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)** may be accessed at https://tats.ucf.edu/. TATS is a statewide system of technical assistance and training that promotes high-quality programs, which lead to and support positive outcomes for prekindergarten children with disabilities and their families.

13. The **State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)** project builds capacity to increase school completion rates of students with disabilities, through the provision of professional development to support and scale-up existing research-based practices, develop capacity for use of evidence-based dropout prevention strategies, and enlist parental support of these research based practices. These practices include Check & Connect (C&C) and the Strategic Instruction Model™ (SIM). C&C is a Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention used with secondary school students who show warning signs of disengagement with school and who are at risk of dropping out. At the core of C&C is a trusting relationship between the student and a trained mentor who both advocates and challenges the student to keep education salient. SIM is a literacy program centered on promoting effective teaching and learning of critical content in schools. Focusing on the Learning Strategies Curriculum and Content Enhancement Routines, SIM strives to help teachers make decisions about what is of greatest importance, what can be taught to help students become more effective learners, and how to teach so that all students, including students with disabilities, increase their proficiency in the Florida standards. SPDG does not have a website; however, if you have questions, contact Margaret Sullivan, director of SPDG, at msullivan@fgcu.edu.

14. The **FLPBIS:MTSS** may be accessed at http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu. Significant behavior problems contribute to unsafe school environments and to reductions in student performance; therefore, FLPBIS:MTSS is committed to building the capacity of school districts so that they may better assist schools to develop effective discipline, social skills teaching and behavior support strategies for all students.

15. The **Institute for Small and Rural Districts (ISRD)** may be accessed at http://isrd.nefec.org/. ISRD provides a forum for school district staff to keep abreast of a wide array of topics impacting the delivery of services to students with disabilities and their families, such as curriculum and instructional practices; educational policies, procedures and practices; behavior support; and transition. ISRD's primary purpose is to provide staff development, training and technical support to a network of 35 small and rural school districts, lab schools, the Florida Virtual School and the Department of Corrections. Overall, ISRD's goal is to ensure that service to students with disabilities and their families is enhanced and that positive outcomes for students with disabilities is achieved through increased student performance.

SST Members for Miami-Dade County School District

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
325 West Gaines Street
Suite 614, Turlington Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
850-245-0475
http://www.fldoe.org/ese

Monica Verra-Tirado
Bureau Chief
Monica.Verra-Tirado@fldoe.org

Leanne Grillot
Senior Educational Program Director
Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
Leanne.Grillot@fldoe.org

Jan Oberschlake
Program Specialist
DRM
Jan.Oberschlake@fldoe.org

Jennifer Barnhill
Program Specialist
DRM
Jennifer.Barnhill@fldoe.org

Aimee Kowalczyk
Parent Services
BEESS Resource and Information Center
Aimee.Kowalczyk@fldoe.org

BEESS Discretionary Projects

Lisa Friedman-Chavez
Regional Representative
Project 10
lfchavez@mail.usf.edu

Kelly Justice
Coordinator
Problem Solving: Response to Intervention
(PS/RtI)
justice@usf.edu

Marie Katia Castor
Project Manager
Multiagency Network for Students with
Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities
MCastor@dadeschools.net

Ana Torres
Director
Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources
System
anamtorres@dadeschools.net

Diana Morales
Facilitator
FIN
dmorales@contactfin.com

JaSheena Ekhator
Facilitator
FIN
jekhator@contactfin.com

Mixary Sorondo
Facilitator
FIN
msorondo@contactfin.com

Devon Minch
Technical Assistance Specialist
Florida Positive Behavioral Interventions
and Support Project
dminch@usf.edu

Tony Dutra
Technology Coordinator
PS/RtI, Technology and Learning
Connections
tdutra@usf.edu