

FINAL REPORT OF FOCUSED MONITORING OF
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

LEE COUNTY

MAY 21 - 25, 2001



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CHARLIE CRIST
COMMISSIONER

SHAN GOFF, CHIEF
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

June 17, 2002

Dr. John W. Sanders, Superintendent
Lee County Public Schools
2055 Central Avenue
Fort Myers, FL 33901-3988

Dear Superintendent Sanders:

We are pleased to provide you with the final copy of your monitoring report from our visit on May 21-25, 2001. This report reflects revisions made after the preliminary report, based upon written correspondence from and telephone conversations with your staff.

Please note the following:

- Any forms the district develops to respond to findings of noncompliance must be submitted to the Bureau for review within 30 days of development.
- Quarterly summaries of the district's activities related to the implementation of the system improvement measures, as stated in this report, beginning September 1, 2002 and extending until the end of the 2002-03 school year unless otherwise noted, must be submitted to the Bureau.
- The district's progress related to system improvement measures via the continuous improvement monitoring process will be reviewed.

Copies of this report are also being sent to the chairperson of the Lee County School Board and the principals of the schools visited.

If my staff can be of any assistance as you continue to implement the system improvement measures, please contact me or Eileen Amy, Program Administration and Evaluation Administrator at 850-488-1570 or via electronic mail at goffs@mail.doe.state.fl.us or amye@mail.doe.state.fl.us.

Thank you for your continuing commitment to improve services for exceptional education students in Lee County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shan Goff".

Shan Goff, Chief
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

Enclosure

cc: Katherine Boren
Terry Andrews
Mike Bursztyn
Charles F. Bell
Sylvia Gibson
Betty Cox

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INTRODUCTION

The Florida Department of Education, through the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, in carrying out its role of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation is required to: examine and evaluate procedures, records, and programs in each school district of the state to determine compliance with state law and State Board of Education Rules; provide information and assistance to the superintendents and other district personnel in correcting deficiencies; and otherwise assist the districts in operating effectively and efficiently (Section 229.565, Florida Statutes, and Rule 6A-1.0453, Florida Administrative Code). Additionally, the Florida Department of Education, as the State Educational Agency, is required to supervise school district implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its implementing regulations in Part 300 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

METHOD

With guidance from a work group charged with the responsibility of recommending revisions to the Bureau's monitoring system, substantial revisions were initiated during the 2000-2001 school year. Three types of monitoring processes have been established as part of a comprehensive system of monitoring and oversight including: Focused Monitoring; Continuous Improvement/Self Assessment Monitoring; and Random Monitoring. Focused monitoring is the first type to be piloted by the Bureau and is the foundation for the activities and outcomes described in this report.

The revised monitoring system reflects the Department's commitment to providing assistance and service 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 and state laws, rules, and regulations. In addition, the monitoring system serves to ensure implementation of corrective actions such as those required subsequent to monitoring by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and other quality assurance activities of the Department.

Focused Monitoring

The purpose of the focused monitoring process is to implement a methodology that targets the Bureau's monitoring intervention on key data indicators ("triggers") that are identified as having significance in terms of educational outcomes for students. Through this process the Bureau uses such data to inform the monitoring process, thereby implementing a strategic approach to subsequent intervention and commitment of resources.

The monitoring restructuring work group recommended four "triggers" or data elements to examine for the 2000-2001 pilot year and for the next several years.

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Those data elements included: percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular education classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their non-disabled peers); dropout rate for students with disabilities; percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma; and participation of students with disabilities in statewide assessments. The Bureau analyzed data related to these triggers and districts were selected to be monitored based on the results. Each district selected for monitoring was examined based on one selected trigger and eight topical areas. These topical areas are used to organize this report and are discussed in further detail on page 3.

Lee County School District was selected as one of four pilot sites to be monitored based on the results of a review of data submitted electronically to the Department of Education Information Database for surveys 2, 3, 5, and 9 and from the assessment files. The trigger identified for Lee County School District as a result of this review was the dropout rate for students with disabilities. In addition to the data related to the trigger, the following information for the school years 1997-98 through 1999-00 was also examined in preparation for the monitoring visit: participation rate and student performance on state assessments; retention rate; separate class placements for students identified as educable mentally handicapped; discipline rates; and prevalence data.

A profile containing data indicators that describe measures of educational benefit, the status of the Lee County School District with respect to placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, and student membership in programs for students with disabilities and those identified as gifted was developed and is included as Appendix A. The information is presented for Lee County School District, districts of comparable enrollment size, and the state. Where appropriate and available, comparative data for non-disabled students are included. The intent of the profile is to provide a tool that will help target areas that hold potential for the greatest improvement, thereby improving outcomes for exceptional students in the district.

Parent Survey

In order to provide maximum opportunity for input from parents, on April 27, 2001, a survey was mailed to the parents of 9,667 students with disabilities and 4,285 gifted students currently enrolled in Lee County's programs. The survey has been used for the past two years in 26 school districts as part of the ongoing monitoring of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs. The survey was designed for the Bureau by the University of Miami research staff to capture parent perceptions on a number of factors. Responses were received from 1508 parents of students with disabilities (128 pre-k; 767 grades k-5; 419 grades 6-8; and 194 grades 9-12) and 1,215 gifted students (692 grades k-5; 520 grades 6-8; and 3 grades 9-12). Results of the survey will be discussed, as appropriate, in the body of this report. Data from the survey responses are included as Appendix B.

APPENDIX A – LEA PROFILE

APPENDIX B – PARENT SURVEY RESPONSES

APPENDIX C – MONITORING TEAM MEMBERS

APPENDIX D – GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

