

Bay County School District

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring

Exceptional Student Education Programs

March 24–26, 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.

Telephone: (850) 245-0477

Fax: (850) 245-0987

E-mail: cicbiscs@FLDOE.org

Website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese>

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

T. WILLARD FAIR, *Chairman*

Members

DR. AKSHAY DESAI

MARK KAPLAN

ROBERTO MARTÍNEZ

JOHN R. PADGET

KATHLEEN SHANAHAN

SUSAN STORY

Dr. Eric J. Smith
Commissioner of Education



May 24, 2010

Mr. William V. Husfelt, Superintendent
Bay County School District
1311 Balboa Avenue
Panama City, FL 32401-2080

Dear Superintendent Husfelt:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report of On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs* for Bay County School District. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site visit to your district on March 24–26, 2010, including student record reviews, interviews with school and district staff, and classroom observations. 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 Bay County School District was selected for an on-site monitoring visit due to students with disabilities being reported for weighted funding at the 254 cost factor through the Florida Education Finance Program at more than 150 percent of the state rate. Mr. Patrick Martin, Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Director, and his staff were very helpful during the Bureau's preparation for the visit and during the on-site monitoring. In addition, the principals and other staff members at the schools welcomed and assisted Bureau staff members. *The Bureau's on-site monitoring activities did not identify any discrepancies; therefore, no corrective action is required as a result of this visit.*

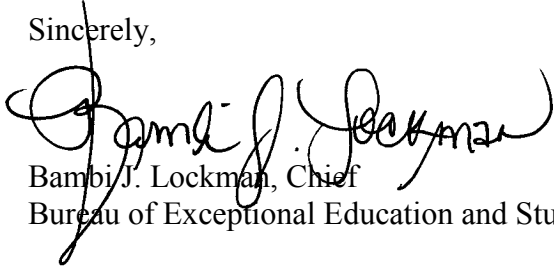
BAMBI J. LOCKMAN
Chief

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Mr. William V. Husfelt
May 24, 2010
Page Two

Thank you for your commitment to improving services for exceptional education for students in Bay 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 the first name being the most prominent.

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

Enclosure

cc: Nancy Boyd
Patrick Martin
Kim C. Komisar
Patricia Howell
Brenda Fisher

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

March 24–26, 2010

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

Bay County School District

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring Exceptional Student Education Programs March 24–26, 2010

Table of Contents

Authority	1
Monitoring Process	1
District Selection	1
On-Site Activities	2
<i>Monitoring Team</i>	2
<i>Schools</i>	3
<i>Student Focus Group</i>	3
<i>Data Collection</i>	3
<i>Review of Records</i>	3
Results	3
Commendations	4
Concerns	4
Recommendations	5
Findings of Noncompliance	5
Corrective Action	5
Technical Assistance	6
Glossary of Acronyms	7

Bay County School District

On-Site Monitoring Exceptional Student Education Programs March 24–26, 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 to operate 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

In a letter dated December 11, 2009, the Bay County School District Superintendent was informed that the district was selected for a Level 3 on-site visit due to matrix levels being greater than 150 percent of the state rate for the 254 cost factor.

On-Site Activities

Monitoring Team

On March 24–26, 2010, Bureau staff members conducted an on-site monitoring visit, which included meeting with district staff to discuss strategies in place to address matrix levels. The following Bureau staff members participated in the on-site visit:

- Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance (Team Leader)
- Anne Bozik, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance
- Jill Snelson, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance
- Annette Oliver, Program Specialist, Program Administration and Quality Assurance

Schools

The following schools were selected for on-site visits based on the number of students with matrix of service cost factors of 254 and 255:

- Cedar Grove Elementary School
- Chautauqua Learn and Serve Charter School
- Margaret K. Lewis Exceptional School
- New Horizons Learning Center
- St. Andrews Elementary School

Student Focus Group

Four students at New Horizons Learning Center participated in a student focus group that Bureau staff conducted at the request of the school principal. The students discussed their experiences at the school and postsecondary plans. One of the students stated a desire to remain at this alternative site because this student felt that his or her academic needs were better met in this setting.

Data Collection

Individual educational plans (IEPs) for 27 randomly selected students with disabilities enrolled in grades prekindergarten through 12 in the Bay County School District were reviewed regarding matrix of services documentation. In addition, monitoring activities included the following:

- District-level interview – 3 participants
- School-level administrator interviews – 14 participants
- Teacher interviews – 19 interviews
- Case studies – 27 students
- Focus Group – 4 students

Review of Records

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

- Current IEP
- Functional behavioral assessment (FBA)/behavioral intervention plan (BIP), if applicable
- Related services logs
- Student and teacher schedules
- Other supporting documentation as required by the *Matrix of Services Handbook*

This documentation was reviewed to verify that the services indicated on the matrix of services document were supported by the IEP and provided to the student as required.

Results

Section 1011.62(1)(e), F.S., describes the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) funding model for exceptional student education programs, including basic, at-risk, support levels IV and V for exceptional students, career cost factors, and a guaranteed allocation for ESE programs. Exceptional education cost factors are determined by using a matrix of services to document the services that each exceptional student will receive. This model is designed to provide funds to a school district for the services that the district pays for or provides. If the district has a cost-sharing arrangement for services, the district may not report them for weighted funding. In

addition, the nature and intensity of the services indicated on the matrix are to be consistent with the services described in the exceptional student's IEP. If a student with a disability is enrolled in a special program (e.g., dropout prevention program) and requires a service that is routinely provided to all students in that program, including nondisabled students, the district cannot claim weighted funding for that service via the matrix.

The following results reflect the data collected through the activities of the on-site monitoring as well as commendations, concerns, and findings of noncompliance. Additional documentation was requested during the on-site visit to verify matrix services levels.

Commendations

- The schools were pleasant and orderly with an appearance of being well-organized and managed.
- School faculty and staff demonstrated a high level of professionalism and commitment to the students.
- A high level of collaboration was evidenced between ESE teachers and related services providers.
- There was evidence of parent communication and involvement in decision making for the ESE students.
- The district makes a diligent effort to move students from the center schools or cluster sites back to the regular zoned schools. They try to make the moves during the most appropriate school year break, so the students can transition successfully.
- Students in the focus group at New Horizons Learning Center indicated that the school was well managed, the administration and faculty know each of the students, and they receive services in a smaller group than in their prior schools. According to the students, this has made them more excited about attending school, and they are more successful academically at this school.
- Chautauqua Learn and Serve Charter School's teaching of the core values of service, social justice, honor and dignity, working with others, integrity, and competence were evidenced throughout the observations at the school and in the community (e.g., fundraiser at the American Legion Hall). These students are provided many opportunities to learn to be independent in their community, other states, and other countries. Service to others has been demonstrated through travel to help students with disabilities in other countries.
- St. Andrews Elementary School is a gold star Positive Behavior Support (PBS) school. Despite staff turnover, the school has been able to maintain a high level of PBS services.
- Cedar Grove Elementary School and Margaret K. Lewis Exceptional School provide structured programs for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Enrollment of students with ASD has increased and school administration reported a high level of parent advocacy.

Concerns

- Speech therapists' logs at New Horizons Learning Center indicated that the therapists were absent from sessions because of IEP team meetings for other students. There was no indication of a review of missed sessions to determine whether make-up sessions might be needed.

- Chautauqua Learn and Serve Charter School used different forms to document related services than other schools in the district. These forms did not include as much information, making it more difficult to verify the provision of related services specified on the students' IEPs. The district has provided copies of forms to this school in an effort to make data collection easier, consistent, and more informative.

Recommendations

The Bay County School District should consider reviewing the district's tracking of therapy services to ensure that patterns of missed sessions are addressed as appropriate. Since the on-site visit, the district has begun reviewing therapist caseloads on a more frequent basis to consider possible staff reallocations in order to ensure equitable coverage. In addition, the district plans to include the documentation of missed therapy sessions in therapists' monthly reports. The district stated plans to review the documentation of therapy services for patterns of missed sessions for which make-up sessions may be needed.

Findings of Noncompliance

Upon final review of documentation related to the matrix of services, there were no discrepancies that resulted in a change in the cost factor.

Corrective Action

No corrective actions are required.

Technical Assistance

Specific information for technical assistance, support, and guidance to school districts regarding matrix training and completion can be found in the *Matrix of Services Handbook*.

Bureau Contacts

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

ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance

(850) 245-0476

Kim Komisar, Ph.D., Administrator
Kim.Komisar@fldoe.org

Patricia Howell, Program Director
Monitoring and Compliance
Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org

Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist
Bay County ESE Compliance Liaison
Monitoring and Compliance
Brenda.Fisher@fldoe.org

Anne Bozik, Program Specialist
Monitoring and Compliance
Anne.Bozik@fldoe.org

Annette Oliver, Program Specialist
Program Administration and Quality Assurance

Annette.Oliver@fldoe.org

Jill Snelson, Program Specialist
Monitoring and Compliance

Jill.Snelson@fldoe.org

Clearinghouse Information Center

(850) 245-0477

cicbises@FLDOE.org

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

Glossary of Acronyms

ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
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
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
FEFP	Florida Education Finance Program
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
SPP	State Performance Plan



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

313026G