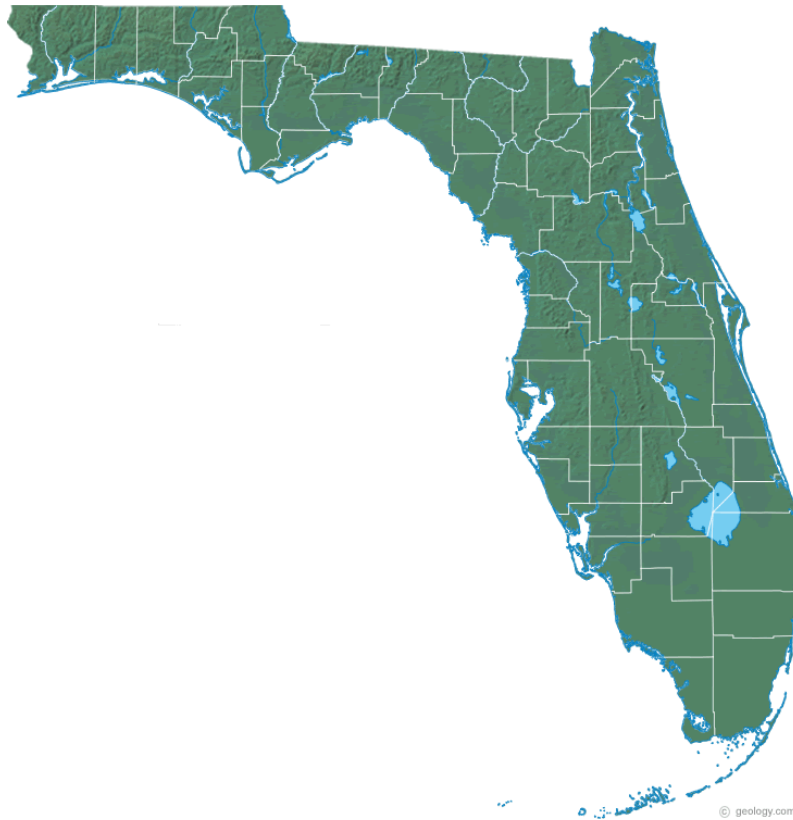


# Orange County School District

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring

Exceptional Student Education Programs

September 21-25, 2009



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](mailto:cicbiscs@FLDOE.org)

Web site: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

---

T. WILLARD FAIR, *Chairman*

### *Members*

PETER BOULWARE

DR. AKSHAY DESAI

ROBERTO MARTÍNEZ

JOHN R. PADGET

KATHLEEN SHANAHAN

LINDA K. TAYLOR

Dr. Eric J. Smith  
Commissioner of Education



November 16, 2009

Mr. Ronald Blocker, Superintendent  
Orange County School District  
P. O. Box 271  
Orlando, Florida 32802-0271

Dear Superintendent Blocker:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report of On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Programs* for Orange County School District. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to our visit on September 21-25, 2009, including student record reviews, interviews with school and district staff, classroom observations, and the 2008-09 ESE compliance self-assessment conducted by the school district. The final report will be placed on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' Web site and may be viewed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

The Orange County School District was selected for an on-site monitoring visit due to the number of students reported for weighted funding through the Florida Education Finance Program. Specifically, the district's rate for students reported at the 254 cost factor was 200% or more than the state rate for the 2008 Survey 3. Ms. Anna Diaz, Associate Superintendent, Exceptional Student Education and Multilingual Services, and her staff were very helpful during the Bureau's preparation for the visit and the on-site monitoring. In addition, Bureau staff members were welcomed and assisted by the principals and other staff at all schools that were visited. The Bureau's on-site monitoring activities identified two discrepancies, one of which required corrective action. The other discrepancy was corrected by the district prior to this report.

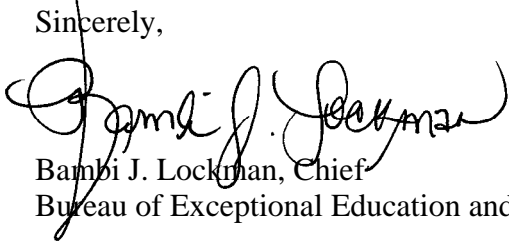
**BAMBI J. LOCKMAN**  
*Chief*

*Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services*

Mr. Ronald Blocker  
November 16, 2009  
Page 2

Thank you for your commitment to improving services for exceptional education students in Orange 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](mailto:patricia.howell@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,

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

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

Enclosure

cc: Anna Diaz  
Harriet Brown  
Kim C. Komisar  
Patricia Howell  
Brenda Fisher

**Orange County School District  
Final Report: On-Site Focused Monitoring**

**September 21-25, 2009**

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



**Orange County School District**

**Final Report: On-Site Monitoring  
September 21-25, 2009**

**Table of Contents**

Authority ..... 1  
Monitoring Process ..... 1  
    District Selection..... 1  
    Matrix of Services..... 2  
    On-Site Activities..... 3  
        *Monitoring Team* ..... 3  
        *Schools* ..... 3  
        *Data Collection*..... 3  
Results..... 4  
Corrective Action..... 4  
Technical Assistance..... 5  
Glossary of Acronyms ..... 7



# Orange County School District

## On-Site Focused Monitoring September 21-25, 2009

### Final Report

#### Authority

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, 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 ss. 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and ESE programs; provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (Section 300.1(d) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR § 300.1(d)), and districts are required to make a good faith effort to assist children with disabilities to achieve their stated goals and objectives in the least restrictive environment. In accordance with IDEA, the Department 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 the Department'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 2008-09 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.

Decisions regarding the components of Level 1 and Level 2 monitoring for 2008-09 were driven by the following: issues raised in recent Office of Program Policy and Governmental Accountability (OPPAGA) reports and legislative action regarding gifted education and matrix of services; issues addressed during the on-site monitoring of Florida's ESE programs by the

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP); and the requirements of the SPP/Annual Performance Report (APR).

All districts were required to complete Level 1 compliance self-assessment 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 activities, and Level 2 activities as applicable. Preliminary selection of districts for consideration for Level 3 monitoring was based on the following, and resulted in the identification of 22 districts:

- >150% of the state rate for students reported at the 254 and 255 **matrix** levels (state rate for 254: 4.84%; 255: 2.08%; 254/255 combined: 6.92%)
- >150% of the state rate for formal requests for **dispute resolution** (state rate: 0.12%)
- **Correction of noncompliance** not completed within the required timeline (one year from identification)

On-site monitoring was reserved for those situations that require classroom observations or staff interviews, and for those that could not adequately be addressed through student record desk reviews (e.g., individual educational plan (IEP) implementation; services being provided in accordance with the matrix). The list of 22 districts was further narrowed by raising the limit for the matrix of services to 200% of the state rate, and consideration was given to any districts that met the criteria for selection in more than one area (matrix, dispute resolution, and correction of noncompliance).

In a letter dated March 6, 2009, Orange County School District was informed that the Bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit related to the district's ESE programs, specifically related to matrix levels that were 200% or more of the state rate for 254.

## **Matrix of Services**

Section 1011.62(e), F.S., describes the State of Florida's funding model for exceptional student education programs using basic, at-risk, support levels IV and V for exceptional students, and career Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) 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. Within the matrix, five domains are used to group the types of services, and five levels are used to describe the nature and intensity of services within each domain. The total number of points is determined by adding together the scores for each domain and applicable special considerations and results in a rating of Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, or Level 5.

In order to generate funds at weighted cost factors of 254 or 255, a matrix of services must be completed at least once every three years by personnel who have received approved training. The nature and intensity of the services indicated on the matrix are to be consistent with the services described in each exceptional student's IEP. School districts must ensure that each matrix of services document reflects the student's current services. If services change as a result of an IEP team decision, a new matrix of services document must be completed. If services do not change

as a result of an IEP team meeting, and the matrix is less than three years old, the existing document may be reviewed and remain in effect. Matrix of services documents are required for McKay Scholarship students at all cost factor levels and may be completed for students with disabilities receiving services above Level 1 in Department of Juvenile Justice facilities and charter schools.

## **On-Site Activities**

### ***Monitoring Team***

On September 21-25, 2009, the following ESE Monitoring and Compliance Bureau staff conducted the on-site monitoring visit to review matrix of services documents for students with disabilities enrolled in Orange County:

- Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist (Team Leader)
- Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance
- Vicki Eddy, Program Specialist
- Annette Oliver, Program Specialist
- Jill Snelson, Program Specialist

### ***Schools***

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

- Durrance Elementary School
- Freedom High School
- Gateway School
- Gotha Middle School
- Magnolia School
- Oak Ridge High School
- Piedmont Lakes Middle School
- Princeton House Charter School

IEPs and matrix of services documents were also reviewed from the following schools:

- Sunset Park Elementary School
- Odyssey Middle School
- Maitland Middle School

### ***Data Collection***

Monitoring activities included the following:

- District-level interviews – 3
- School-level interviews – 42
- Record reviews – 53
  - IEPs
  - Matrix of Services
  - Supporting documentation
- Classroom observations – 48
- Case studies – 48

## Results

The information reported here includes data collected through the activities of the on-site monitoring as well as the review of Orange County School District matrix of services documents and supporting documentation. Following this records review and the completion of on-site monitoring activities, the Bureau noted the following:

1. The district reported that at the beginning of the 2009-10 school year there were 32,820 ESE students in the Orange County School District (24,067 students with disabilities and 8,753 students identified as gifted).
2. There were 2,753 students reported for weighted funding at the 254 or 255 factors as of September 8, 2009.
3. The district has been providing training meetings twice per month since April 2009 in order to expand the training provided at the teacher level.
4. All matrix of services documents that were reviewed by the Bureau had been completed and reviewed by staff members who had been trained in the process.
5. All matrix of services documents reviewed by the Bureau had been completed and/or reviewed within the past year by the school district.
6. The overall atmosphere of the schools visited was overwhelmingly positive, with evidence of positive behavioral interventions and supports.
7. As a result of the inclusion model recently implemented at Oak Ridge High School, all of the students previously reported at the 254 or 255 cost factors had been changed to lower cost factors that do not require a matrix of services.
8. The school district provided sufficient documentation to support funding categories for each of the student records reviewed, with the exception of the following:
  - A twelfth-grade student reported at the 255 cost factor who had been rated Level 4 for Domain E (Communication) - There was no evidence of face-to-face collaboration occurring more than once a week.
  - A seventh-grade student reported at the 254 cost factor who had been rated Level 3 for Domain B (Social/Emotional Behavior) - The district acknowledged that Domain B should be rated as Level 1, which dropped the cost factor below 254. This change was verified by Education Information and Accountability Services staff through the Automated Student Information System database.

## Corrective Action

The matrix of services document must accurately reflect the current level of services being provided for the student as indicated on the student's IEP. No later than December 4, 2009, the Orange County School District shall correct the funding level within the Automated Student Information System database for the one twelfth-grade student referenced in *Results* (above) for whom on-site observation and interviews did not verify that this student was receiving the services on the IEP at the funding level referenced on the matrix. Specific student information is being provided to the district by a separate attachment.

## **Technical Assistance**

The following resources are designed to provide technical assistance, support, and guidance to school districts regarding matrix requirements:

### **Publications**

The following documents are available through the Bureau's Clearinghouse:

- <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/matrixnu.pdf> *Use of the Exceptional Student Education Matrix of Services*
- *Exceptional Student Education/Florida Education Finance Program (ESE/FEFP) Matrix of Services Handbook 2004*. Publication 309010B

The following is a partial list of Bureau staff available for future technical assistance in the completion or review of matrix of services documents:

### **ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance**

(850) 245-0476

Kim Komisar, Ph.D., Administrator

[Kim.Komisar@fldoe.org](mailto:Kim.Komisar@fldoe.org)

Patricia Howell, Program Director

Monitoring and Compliance

[Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org](mailto:Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org)

Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist

Orange County School District's

Bureau-District Monitoring Liaison

[Brenda.Fisher@fldoe.org](mailto:Brenda.Fisher@fldoe.org)

### **Clearinghouse Information Center**

(850) 245-0477

Kathy Ancar, Supervisor

[cicbiscs@FLDOE.org](mailto:cicbiscs@FLDOE.org)



**Appendix:**

**Glossary of Acronyms**



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

**Glossary of Acronyms**

APR	Annual Performance Report
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
ESE	Exceptional student education
FEFP	Florida Education Finance Program
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004
IEP	Individual educational plan
OPPAGA	Office of Program Policy and Governmental Accountability
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
SPP	State Performance Plan



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

ESE 312985E