

FINAL REPORT OF FOCUSED MONITORING OF  
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

# HARDEE COUNTY

MARCH 15-17, 2004



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
BUREAU OF EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SERVICES  
ESE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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April 26, 2005

Mr. Dennis G. Jones, Superintendent  
Hardee County School District  
P.O. Drawer 1678  
Wauchula, Florida 33873-1678

Dear Superintendent Jones:

We are pleased to provide you with the Final Report of Focused Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs in Hardee County. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information including student record reviews; interviews with school and district staff; information from focus groups; and parent, teacher, and student survey data from our visit on March 15-17, 2004. The report includes a system improvement plan outlining the findings of the monitoring team. The final report will be placed on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' website and may be viewed at [www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm).

Bureau staff have worked with Dorothy Bell, ESE Director, and her staff to develop a system improvement plan that includes strategies and activities to address the areas of concern and noncompliance identified in the report. We anticipate that some of the action steps that will be implemented will be long term in duration, and will require time to assess the measure of effectiveness. In addition, as appropriate, plans related to the district's continuous improvement monitoring may also relate to action steps proposed in response to this report. The system improvement plan has been approved and is included as a part of this final report.

Semi-annual updates of outcomes achieved and/or a summary of related activities, as identified in your district's plan, must be submitted for the next two years, unless otherwise noted on the plan. The first scheduled update will be due on May 30, 2005. A verification monitoring visit to your district will take place two years after your original monitoring visit.

**BAMBI J. LOCKMAN**  
*Chief*

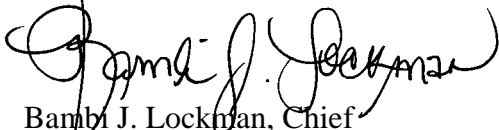
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Superintendent Jones  
April 26, 2005  
Page 2

If my staff can be of any assistance as you implement the System Improvement Plan, please contact Eileen L. Amy, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance Administrator. Mrs. Amy may be reached at 850/245-0476, or via electronic mail at [Eileen.Amy@fldoe.org](mailto:Eileen.Amy@fldoe.org).

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

Sincerely,



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

Enclosure

cc: James Stallings, School Board Chairman  
Members of the School Board  
Gavin O'Brien, School Board Attorney  
School Principals  
Dorothy Bell, ESE Director  
Eileen Amy  
Evy Friend  
Kim Komisar

**Hardee County Final Monitoring Report  
 Focused Monitoring Visit  
 March 15-17, 2004**

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**Hardee County School District**  
**Focused Monitoring Visit**  
**March 15-17, 2004**

**Executive Summary**

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 Sections 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and programs of exceptional student education (ESE); 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 the Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)), 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 (34 CFR Sections 300.350(a)(2) and 300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA 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 Section 300.600(a)(1) and (2)).

During the week of March 15, 2004, the Bureau conducted an on-site review of the exceptional student education programs in Hardee County Public Schools. Dorothy Bell, Director, Exceptional Student Education, served as the coordinator and point of contact for the district during the monitoring visit. In its continuing efforts to focus the monitoring process on student educational outcomes, the Bureau has identified four key data indicators: percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers); dropout rate for students with disabilities; percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma; and, participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities. Hardee County was selected for monitoring on the basis of its dropout rate for students with disabilities. The results of the monitoring process are reported under categories or topical issues that are considered to impact or contribute to the key data indicator. In addition, information related to services for gifted students, services provided to ESE students in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities and charter schools, records and forms reviews, and supplemental compliance issues are reported.

**Summary of Findings**

**General Information**

A majority of students with disabilities in Hardee County who have recently dropped out of school are identified as having a specific learning disability (SLD), were pursuing a special diploma at the time of their withdrawal, and more than a third were in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The most

common reasons given for students with disabilities dropping out of high school were withdrawn for nonattendance, did not enter at the start of the school year, and voluntarily leaving with no intention of returning.

### **Administration and Policy**

The lack of correction of student's withdrawal codes may skew the dropout data for the district. Initial results from the PIA at Hardee Jr. High School indicate that it may be an effective strategy to keep at-risk student from being retained or dropping out. Hardee County should be commended for their development of the Positive Intervention Academy. While there was evidence of child study teams (CST) being convened to address chronic nonattendance at the elementary and middle school levels, Hardee High School did not comply with the statutory requirement for 16 of the students who dropped out in 2002-2003.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

The quality and content of academic instruction across the district was observed to be planned and implemented in ways to promote student learning and ensure access to the appropriate curriculum. A full range of service delivery models are available, although the variation in placement patterns from school to school (e.g., Hardee Junior High School and Hardee High School) indicated that some placement decisions may be based on organizational or administrative practices.

### **Discipline and Classroom Management**

Although the monitoring team noted effective classroom management in most classes observed, interviews with staff and reviews of school-level data on student referrals and suspensions indicates that disciplinary policy and procedures are an area of concern. All forms of in-school suspension (ISS) and alternative curriculum environment (ACE) have not been reported consistently to the Department of Education (DOE) in the past. The process of conducting manifestation determination meetings was not clearly documented in the case notes of students with a pattern of suspension, but who are not being expelled. At the time of the on-site visit there were students on modified-day schedules due to behavioral issues who did not have a specific plan for return documented in the individual educational plan (IEP). The interventions in evidence through interviews and record reviews conducted at Hardee High School were limited to time-out, talking to the student, parent phone calls, and suspension.

### **Staff Development**

School level staff in Hardee County are provided with a multitude of workshops benefiting students in the areas of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) preparation in reading, writing and math, and strategies to use with speakers of other languages; participation was reported to be good. In addition, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS), Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) and the Multiagency Network for Students with Severe Emotional Disturbance (SEDNET) have offered workshops on a variety of topics. While many trainings focused on behavioral or classroom management issues, limited participation in these sessions was reported and several respondents reported a need for staff development in this area.



### **Parental Involvement**

While attendance at IEP meetings is reported to be better attended than other meetings in the district, a lack of transportation and the inability to miss work is a major stumbling block to parent participation. Parental participation continues to be seen by staff as an area of concern.

### **Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities**

District and school level employees feel that the rural and economically disadvantaged status of families in Hardee County lead students to drop out in order to go to work to help their families financially, and inaccurate reporting specifically related to the counties did not enter (DNE) reporting skew the dropout data.

### **Services to Gifted Students**

The needs of students identified as gifted in Hardee County are addressed in a range of placements including enrollment in special classes, consultative services or advanced courses at the high school level, and dual enrollment at South Florida Community College. The district is addressing the needs of the gifted students in Hardee County.

### **Services to ESE Students in DJJ Facilities**

Bowling Green Youth Academy is a Level 6 Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facility which served six students with disabilities at the time of the visit. Students with disabilities may work toward a special or standard diploma, as well as the general education development (GED) exit option. Basic reading, writing and math skills are emphasized in the curriculum. Students either take the FCAT, an alternative assessment or chose not to take the FCAT because they are working toward a GED exit option. Students with disabilities have access to meaningful vocational experiences while at this facility.

### **Additional Compliance**

Students in Hardee County with communication needs are being addressed by ESE teachers through communication and instructional goals on their IEPs. Students who have counseling needs are met through a variety of models. Students needs in the area of counseling appear to be addressed; however, counseling was not included as a related service on the IEPs reviewed. Transition services for students who require agency participation in Hardee County are addressed through the ARC and SFCC, among other agencies.

### **Student Record Reviews**

No IEPs were required to be reconvened and there were no funding adjustments. There was one systemic finding of noncompliance in the area of transition, and individual findings on IEPs were noted in 13 additional areas. One initial eligibility meeting for a gifted student did not include all of the participants required under district guidelines.

### **District Forms Review**

The following forms were required to include a statement of where a copy of procedural safeguards may be found; these revisions have been made.

- Notice and Consent for Initial Placement
- Informed Notification of Change of Placement
- Informed Notification of Change of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)

- Informed Notice of Refusal
- Informed Notice of Ineligibility

## **System Improvement Plan**

In response to these findings, the district is required to develop a system improvement plan for submission to the Bureau. This plan must include activities and strategies intended to address specific findings, as well as measurable evidence of change. In developing the system improvement plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement activities resulting from this focused monitoring report to the district's continuous improvement plan. The format for the system improvement plan, including a listing of the critical issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement, is provided with this executive summary.

During the process of conducting the focused monitoring activities, including daily debriefings with the monitoring team and district staff, it is often the case that suggestions and/or recommendations related to interventions or strategies are proposed. Listings of these recommendations as well as specific discretionary projects and Department of Education (DOE) contacts available to provide technical assistance to the district in the development and implementation of the plan also are included as part of this report.

## Hardee County School District Focused Monitoring System Improvement Plan

This section includes the issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement. The district is required to provide system improvement strategies to address identified findings, which may include an explanation of specific activities the district has committed to implementing, or it may consist of a broader statement describing planned strategies. For each issue, the plan also must define the measurable evidence of whether or not the desired outcome has been achieved. Target dates that extend for more than one year should include benchmarks in order to track interim progress. Findings identified as “ESE” are those findings that reflect issues specific to ESE students. Findings identified as “All” are those findings that reflect issues related to the student population as a whole, including ESE students.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Administration and Policy	Student withdrawal codes are not routinely corrected to reflect actual status.		X	The district will request a Data Quality Review from Education Information and Accountability Services at the DOE to ensure that withdrawal codes are coded and edited accurately.	
	Hardee High School does not have a child study team procedure in place to address chronic nonattendance.		X	The district will develop and implement a procedure to ensure that all students who are absent five or more instances in a month or 10 or more instances in a 90 day period are served by a child study team.	
Curriculum and Instruction	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				
Discipline and Classroom Management	ISS and ACE are two models of in-school-suspension in the district; ACE is not reported to		X	Establish procedures to ensure that all in-school-suspensions are reported accurately to the DOE.	

<b>Category</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>ESE</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>System Improvement Strategy</b>	<b>Evidence of Change and Target Date</b>
Discipline and Classroom Management (continued)	DOE as days of suspension.				
	There is no statement of the result of a manifestation determination meeting; it is unclear if a student's action was found to be a manifestation or not.	X		The district will review its procedures for conducting manifestation determination meetings to ensure the proper procedures are followed. Forms used to guide and document the manifestation determination process have been revised and are being evaluated to determine if additional revisions are required. Submitted to the Bureau prior to dissemination of this report.	
	Students are placed on modified-day schedules for behavioral issues with no documented plan for return to a regular day.	X		IEP teams will reconvene to review the IEPs of any students currently served on modified-day schedules as a result of behavioral issues to ensure that a plan of return is included. The IEP team will review students' positive behavioral intervention plans to ensure that strategies that have a good "expectancy" of being effective are implemented, including information on replacement behaviors.	
Staff Development	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Parental Involvement	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				
Gifted Services	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				
Services in DJJ Facilities	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				
Additional Compliance Areas	Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No findings of noncompliance in this area.</li> </ul>	X			
	Counseling as a Related Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although counseling is provided to students with disabilities through a variety of sources, it is not documented on the IEP as a related service.</li> </ul>			The district will be required to review listings of the students with disabilities receiving counseling as a related service and ensure those services are documented on the IEP.	
	Transition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No findings of noncompliance in this area.</li> </ul>				
Record Reviews	There were no findings of noncompliance requiring a funding adjustment or reconvening of the IEP teams.				
	A systemic finding on IEPs was identified in the following area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of identification of transition as the purpose of the meeting</li> </ul>	X		The district will provide training to include transition as a purpose for the meeting for students 14 years or older or in the 8 <sup>th</sup> grade or higher.	
	There were nonsystemic findings of noncompliance on 13 specific				

<b>Category</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>ESE</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>System Improvement Strategy</b>	<b>Evidence of Change and Target Date</b>
Record Reviews (continued)	items on individual IEPs.				
	There were no findings related to matrix reviews.				
Forms Review	<p>Forms used to document the following activities must be revised to include a statement of where a copy of the procedural safeguards may be found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</i></li> <li>• <i>Informed Notice of Change of Placement</i></li> <li>• <i>Informed Notice of Change of FAPE</i></li> <li>• <i>Informed Notice of Refusal</i></li> <li>• <i>Informed Notice of Ineligibility</i></li> </ul>	X		Forms were revised and submitted to the Bureau for review.	Completed prior to dissemination of this report.

# Monitoring Process

## 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 Sections 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and programs of exceptional student education (ESE); 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 (CFR)), 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 (34 CFR §300.350(a)(2) and §300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the IDEA 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 §300.600(a)(1) and (2)).

The monitoring system established to oversee ESE programs reflects the Department's commitment to provide assistance and service to school districts. The system is designed to emphasize improved outcomes and educational benefits for students while continuing to conduct those activities necessary to ensure compliance with applicable federal and state laws, rules, and regulations. The system provides consistency with other state efforts, including the State Improvement Plan required by IDEA.

## 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 identified as significant for educational outcomes for students. Through this process, the Bureau uses data to inform the monitoring process, thereby implementing a strategic approach to intervention and commitment of resources that will improve student outcomes.

## Key Data Indicators

Four key data indicators were recommended by the monitoring stakeholders' workgroup and were adopted for implementation by the Bureau. The key data indicators for the 2004 school year and their sources of data are as follows:

- percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers) (Data source: Survey 9)
- dropout rate for students with disabilities (Data source: Survey 5)

- percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma (Data source: Survey 5)
- participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities (Data sources: performance data from the assessment files and Survey 3 enrollment data)

### **District Selection**

Districts were selected to be monitored based on a review of data from the 2002-03 school year that was submitted electronically to the Department of Education (DOE) Information Database for Surveys 2, 3, 5, 9, and from the assessment files. This data is compiled into an annual data profile for each district which is the local educational agency (LEA) profile. The 2004 LEA profiles for all Florida school districts are available on the web at

<http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/datapage.htm>.

In making the decision to include Hardee County in this year's focused monitoring visits, Bureau staff reviewed data related to the dropout rate for students with disabilities from survey 5. This review indicated that Hardee County's rate of 11.4% approached the highest dropout rate for students with disabilities for all districts in the state. Hardee County School District's current 2004 LEA profile and the 2003 listing of districts rank-ordered on dropout rate for students with disabilities, which was used for district selection, are included in this report as appendix A.

### **Sources of Information**

#### **On-Site Monitoring Activities**

The Bureau conducted the on-site focused monitoring visit from March 15-17, 2004. Five Bureau staff members and one peer monitor conducted site-visits to the following five schools:

- North Wauchula Elementary School
- Hardee Jr. High School
- Hardee High School
- Pioneer Career Academy
- Bowling Green Youth Academy

Peer monitors are exceptional student education personnel from other school districts who are trained to assist with the DOE's monitoring activities. A listing of all participating monitors is provided as appendix B.

#### **Interviews**

Interviews with selected district- and school-level personnel are conducted to gather information from multiple sources about the key data indicator. In addition to the protocol developed specifically to examine dropout rate for students with disabilities, separate protocols are used to address services to gifted students. If a school district includes public charter schools or Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities, separate interview protocols are used to interview staff in those settings. In Hardee County, interviews were conducted with 27 people, including four district-level administrators or support staff (e.g., staffing specialist), 13 school-level administrators or support staff (e.g., guidance counselor, dean of discipline), eight ESE teachers,



and seven general education teachers. At the time of the visit, there was one DJJ program, one alternative school and no charter schools in the district.

### ***Focus Group Interviews***

Focus groups for students are conducted by Bureau staff in order to gather information related to the dropout rate for students with disabilities. In order to provide maximum opportunity for input about the district's ESE services, a minimum of two separate focus group interviews are conducted. The participant groups include students with disabilities who are pursuing a standard diploma and students with disabilities who are pursuing a special diploma. Separate sessions are conducted for each participant group.

In conjunction with the 2004 Hardee County School District monitoring activities, there were 10 participants in the standard diploma student focus group, and nine participants in the focus group for students pursuing a special diploma.

### ***Student Case Studies***

Student case studies are conducted for the purpose of performing an in-depth review of the services a student receives in accordance with his or her IEP. The on-site selection of students for the case studies at each school is based on criteria that have been identified as being characteristic of students at risk of dropping out. As part of this process, the student's records are reviewed, Bureau staff or peer monitors may observe the case study student in class, and teachers are interviewed regarding the implementation of the student's IEP. In-depth case studies were conducted for five students in Hardee County.

### ***Classroom Visits***

Classroom visits are conducted in both ESE and general education classrooms. Some visits are conducted in conjunction with individual student case studies, while others are conducted as general observations of classrooms that include exceptional students. Curriculum and instruction, classroom management and discipline, and classroom design and resources are observed during the general classroom visits. A total of five ESE and five general education classrooms were visited during the focused monitoring visit to Hardee County.

### ***Off-Site Monitoring Activities***

Surveys are designed by the University of Miami research staff in order to provide maximum opportunity for input about the district's ESE services from parents of students with disabilities and students identified as gifted, ESE and general education teachers, and students with disabilities in grades 9-12. Results of the surveys are discussed in the body of this report. Data from each of the surveys are included as appendix C.

### ***Parent Surveys***

The survey that is sent to parents is printed in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole where applicable. It includes a cover letter and a postage paid reply envelope.

The parent survey was sent to parents of the 1,067 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 111 parents (PK, n = 2; K-5, n = 54; 6-8, n = 35; 9 - 12, n = 20), representing 10% of the sample, returned the survey. Eighty-eight surveys

were returned as undeliverable, representing 8% of the sample. Respondents were parents of the following students with disabilities: specific learning disabled, speech impaired, educable mentally handicapped, language impaired, emotionally handicapped, other health impaired, developmentally delayed, profoundly mentally handicapped, autistic, and orthopedically impaired.

The parent survey was sent to parents of the 108 students identified as gifted for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 31 parents (KG-5, n = 16; 6-8, n = 12; 9 - 12, n = 3), representing 29% of the sample, returned the survey. Three surveys were returned as undeliverable, representing 3% of the sample.

### ***Teacher Surveys***

Surveys developed for teachers and other service providers were mailed to each school, with a memo explaining the key data indicator and the monitoring process. All teachers and other service providers, both general education and ESE, were provided an opportunity to respond. The Bureau received 194 teacher surveys representing approximately 53% of ESE and GE teachers in the district. Data are from 6 (75%) of the district's 8 schools.

### ***Student Surveys***

A sufficient number of surveys were provided to allow all students with disabilities, grades 9-12, to respond. Instructions for administration of the survey by classroom teachers, including a written script, were provided for each class or group of students. Since participation in this survey is not appropriate for some students whose disabilities might impair their understanding of the survey, professional judgment is used to determine appropriate participants. The Bureau received 82 surveys representing approximately 35% of students with disabilities in grades 9-12 in the district. Data are from two (50%) of the district's four schools with students in grades 9-12.

### ***Reviews of Student Records and District Forms***

Prior to the on-site monitoring visit, Bureau staff conducts a compliance review of student records randomly selected from the population of exceptional students. The record of at least one student with a matrix rating of 254 or 255 may be reviewed at each school during the on-site visit, if available. In addition to the compliance reviews, selected student records are reviewed at the school site in conjunction with student case studies and classroom visits. In Hardee County, 31 records were reviewed for compliance prior to the visit, and one matrix was reviewed on-site.

In addition, Bureau staff review selected district forms and notices to determine if the required components are included. The results of the review of student records and district forms are described in this report and are included as Appendix D.

## **Reporting Process**

### **Interim Reports**

Daily debriefing sessions are conducted by the monitoring team members in order to review findings, as well as to determine if there is a need to address additional issues or visit additional sites. Preliminary findings and concerns are shared with the ESE director and/or designee

through daily debriefings with the monitoring team leader during the monitoring visit. In addition, the district ESE director is invited to attend the final team debriefing with Bureau staff and peer monitors. During the course of these activities, suggestions for interventions or strategies to be incorporated into the district's system improvement plan may be proposed. Within two weeks of the visit, Bureau administrative staff conduct a telephone conference with the ESE director to review major findings.

### ***Preliminary Report***

Subsequent to the on-site visit, Bureau staff prepare a written report. The report is sent to the district ESE director. Data for the report are compiled from sources that have been previously discussed in this document. The director will have the opportunity to discuss and clarify with Bureau staff any concerns regarding the report before it becomes final.

The report is developed to include the following elements: an executive summary, a description of the monitoring process, and the results section. Appendices with data specific to the district accompany each report.

### ***Final Report***

Upon final review and revision by Bureau staff, the final report is issued. The report is sent to the district, and is posted to the Bureau's website at [www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm).

Within 30 days of the district's receipt of the final report, the system improvement plan, including activities targeting specific findings, must be submitted to the Bureau for review. In developing this plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement plan for focused monitoring to the district's continuous improvement plan. The plan must provide for findings to be addressed in a timely manner, with compliance and procedural issues regarding IEPs and direct services to individual students to be resolved by a date designated by the Bureau, not to exceed 90 days. Other issues may be required to be resolved over a period of time not to exceed one year. All system improvement plans will be expected to extend for a period of at least two years, in order to provide an assurance of the ongoing effectiveness of the district's strategies for improvement. In collaboration with Bureau staff, the district is encouraged to develop methods that correlate activities in order to utilize resources, staff, and time in an efficient manner in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Upon approval of the system improvement plan, it is forwarded to the district and the plan is posted on the website noted above. Corrective actions are monitored through the submission of semiannual status reports of progress to be submitted to the Bureau on June 30<sup>th</sup> and December 30<sup>th</sup> of each year for the duration of the system improvement plan.



## **Reporting of Information**

The data generated through the surveys, focus group interviews, individual interviews, case studies, and classroom visits are summarized in this report. The results from the review of student records and district forms are also presented in this report. This report provides conclusions with regard to the key data indicator and specifically addresses topical issues that may contribute to or impact the indicator. For the dropout rate for students with disabilities, these include the following:

- administration and policy
- curriculum and instruction
- discipline and classroom management
- staff development
- parental involvement
- stakeholder opinion related to the indicator

In addition, information related to services for gifted students, services provided to ESE students in DJJ facilities, supplemental compliance areas, the results of the records reviews, and the results of the forms reviews are reported.

To the extent possible, this report focuses on systemic issues rather than on isolated instances of noncompliance or need for improvement. Systemic issues are those that occur at a sufficient enough frequency that the monitoring team could reasonably infer a system-wide problem. Findings are presented in a preliminary report, and the district has the opportunity to clarify items of concern. In a collaborative effort between the district and Bureau staff, system improvement areas are identified. Findings are addressed through the development of strategies for improvement, and evidence of change will be identified as a joint effort between the district and the Bureau. Strategies that are identified as long-term approaches toward improving the district's issue related to the key data indicator are also addressed through the district's continuous improvement plan.

### **Results**

#### **General Information**

This section provides demographic and background information specific to the district as well as information regarding the identification of students with disabilities who are most likely to drop out. Based on the 2004 LEA Profile Hardee County School District has a total school population of 4,970 (PreK-12), with 21% identified as students with disabilities (including 11% identified eligible as speech impaired only), and 2% identified as gifted.

Hardee County is considered a "small" district and is one of 25 districts in this enrollment group. Respondents reported that Hardee County is essentially a rural community. Based on data reported to DOE, 69% of the students in Hardee County are eligible for free or reduced lunch, compared to 44% across the state as a whole. Hardee County School District is comprised of four elementary schools, two pre-kindergarten centers, one junior high school, one high school, one alternative school and one Department of Juvenile Justice facility (DJJ). It should be noted

that Hardee County has a second FTE count in December due to the high number of migrant students who are not enrolled during the first FTE period in October.

Data provided to the DOE through survey 5 detailed the dropout information for the 2002-03 school year for students enrolled at Hardee High School. A review of the data indicated that a total of 34 students with disabilities were reported to the DOE as having dropped out of high school. Withdrawal codes for the 34 students were reported as follows: nonattendance (13); did not enter at the start of the school year (13); leaving school voluntarily with no intention of returning (5); court action (1); expelled (1); and, unknown (1).

Of the 34 students with disabilities who dropped out during the 2002-03 school year, 21 were identified as specific learning disability (SLD), five as emotionally handicapped (EH), and five as educable mentally handicapped (EMH). In addition, one was identified as trainable mentally handicapped (TMH), one as other health impaired (OHI) and, one as gifted. At the time that they dropped out, 18 students were pursuing a special diploma and 16 students were pursuing a standard diploma. Thirteen of the students were in the ninth grade.

In summary, a majority of students with disabilities in Hardee County who have recently dropped out of school are identified as having a specific learning disability (SLD), were pursuing a special diploma at the time of their withdrawal, and more than a third were in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The most common reasons given for students with disabilities dropping out of high school were withdrawn for nonattendance, did not enter at the start of the school year, and voluntarily leaving with no intention of returning.

### **Administration and Policy**

The IDEA requires that states establish performance indicators and assess progress related to dropout rates for students with disabilities (34 CFR § 300.137). This section provides information related to information specific to administrative policies that may affect the dropout rate for students with disabilities. During the interview process, district staff noted that data correction procedures related to student withdrawal codes are not consistently carried out, and that this may affect the reported dropout rate. While student withdrawal codes may be corrected at any time during the year, data is provided by DOE to the districts twice during the school year, following survey 2 and survey 5, through the use of the Student Dropout Match Information Format (additional information is available through the Education Information and Accountability Services at [www.firn.edu/doe/eias/home0050.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/eias/home0050.htm)).

In an effort to address the needs of student who have had significant problems with attendance, behavior, and multiple retentions, the district has implemented the Positive Intervention Academy (PIA) at Hardee Jr. High School. In addition to providing social skills training and collaborative behavior interventions across teachers and classrooms, the program allows students who have been retained to earn accelerated credits in individual courses. Students at the school are retained if they fail two semesters of a core academic course. While students who are not in PIA must repeat the entire grade, PIA participants can earn credits for individual courses and be promoted mid-year. Data collected by the district thus far indicates that the PIA is having a positive effect both on behavioral and academic performance of students. The district should be commended for this program.

Section 1003.26(1)(b), F.S. requires that a student who has had at least five unexcused absences within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences within a 90-calendar-day period must be referred to the school's child study team (CST) to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing. Both North Wauchula Elementary and Hardee Jr. High report using CSTs to deal with attendance, behavior and academic needs. Staff at Hardee Jr. High School report that a CST is convened after a student has five unexcused absences in order to work with parents, teachers, and the student to improve attendance. After 15 unexcused absences in a 90 day period the guidance counselor refers students to Youth and Family Alternatives or a truancy arbitrator. Hardee High School reported that they did not use the CST to address these areas. According to the attendance records provided by the district, 16 students who dropped out during the 2002-03 school year met the criteria to require the convening of a CST. Although Hardee High School does not use a CST there were several instances of school and district administrators contacting parents on a one-to-one basis pertaining to attendance. Under the attendance policy in place in Hardee High School students lose course credit after four absences in a semester. This decision may be appealed, but these appeals are not routinely approved, especially for multiple occurrences. Students in the focus groups conducted at Hardee High School report that they and their peers often are frustrated due to repeated failures caused by absences.

This monitoring visit was conducted during the second year of implementation of the FCAT waiver, which allows for IEP teams to waive the requirement of a passing score on the FCAT for students with disabilities who meet specific criteria. (Section 1003.43(11)(b), F.S.). School staff reported an informal policy of not informing ESE students of the waiver option until their junior or senior year. Of the students in both the standard diploma and special diploma focus groups only one student had heard of the FCAT waiver and none of the students knew what it was or what the requirements were to obtain a waiver. Both student focus groups reported that they knew of students who had dropped out the previous year who indicated they were dropping out because of their FCAT performance.

In summary, the lack of correction of student's withdrawal codes may skew the dropout data for the district. Initial results from the PIA at Hardee Jr. High School indicate that it may be an effective strategy to keep at-risk student from being retained or dropping out. Hardee County should be commended for their development of the Positive Intervention Academy. While there was evidence of CSTs being convened to address chronic nonattendance at the elementary and middle school levels, Hardee High School did not comply with the statutory requirement for 16 of the students who dropped out in 2002-2003.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

In accordance with 34 CFR §300.26(b)(3)(ii), "specially-designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction...to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that he or she can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children." This section provides information related to instruction of ESE students in the general curriculum.

The monitors observed instruction in 10 classrooms (five ESE and five general education) across the five schools visited. With few exceptions, the quality and content of academic instruction was observed to be planned and implemented in ways that promote student learning and ensure access to the appropriate curriculum. The following specific curricula or programs were reported by teachers and administrators to be effective: SRA Corrective Reading, Compass reading and math labs. Teachers and school administrators reported that the district provides ample support for instruction in the form of both materials and training.

At North Wauchula Elementary School students receive reading support through SRA Corrective Reading from both an ESE teacher and paraprofessional trained in direct instruction. Math instruction and reinforcement is provided through pull-out services by an ESE teacher and the focus was reported to be on the use of manipulatives, repetitive practice and alternate explanations.

At Hardee Jr. High School students with disabilities who are enrolled in the PIA program are served through a consultative model. For the remaining students with disabilities at the school, placement was reported to be as follows: 56% regular class placement (students with disabilities served in special education outside regular class less than 21 percent of the day); 6% resource level (students with disabilities served in special education outside regular class at least 21 percent of the day and no more than 60 percent of the day); and, 38% separate class placement (students with disabilities served in special education outside regular class more than 60 percent of the day).

There are nine ESE teachers at Hardee Jr. High, with seven of those teachers providing core academic instruction in ESE courses. Two ESE teachers teach learning strategies classes that provide students with disabilities support their general education courses. All ESE students are provided electives through the “wheel” program. This gives students with disabilities an opportunity to interact with their nondisabled peers and take advantage of vocational classes such as horticulture, agriculture, and sewing classes.

At Hardee High School the majority of students with disabilities were served at the resource level (76%), with 22% served at the regular level and only 2% served at the separate class level. Students pursuing a standard diploma are supported through leaning strategies classes and consultation. Students in the standard diploma focus group reported that the learning strategies class helped them pass their general education courses and they particularly mentioned that the English and math teachers’ willingness to meet with them one-on-one before school has been a tremendous support. Students pursuing a special diploma at Hardee High School receive most of their core course instruction in ESE classes and students in this focus group reported that they took electives such as chorus, career research, physical education, and welding in the general curriculum. These students reported that they receive the help they need in these classes if they ask for it. Vocational options that exist are reported by staff to be meaningful, and all students with disabilities have access to and some are enrolled in vocational classes. Several staff members reported that safety concerns and readability of course materials in vocational classes (e.g., auto-mechanics and carpentry) limit the participation of some students, and suggested that the use of paraprofessionals would greatly improve success for students with disabilities in these



classes. It was reported by school staff at the high school that students are removed from some vocational classes due to behavioral issues and/or lack of success with course materials.

At all schools visited, there was evidence of opportunities for instructional support and remediation, with extensive focus on reading and math, although staff at the high school reported that rising ninth graders are not always prepared for the rigorous high school curriculum and more independent learning environment. District and high school staff expressed the desire to develop a program at the high school similar to the PIA program at the Jr. High for at-risk students.

In summary, with few exceptions, the quality and content of academic instruction across the district was observed to be planned and implemented in ways to promote student learning and ensure access to the appropriate curriculum. A full range of service delivery models are available, although the variation in placement patterns from school to school (e.g., Hardee Junior High School and Hardee High School) indicated that some placement decisions may be based on organizational or administrative practices.

### **Discipline and Classroom Management**

In accordance with 34 FR 300.346(a)(2)(i), the IEP team must "...In the case of a child with a disability whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others, consider, if appropriate, strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address that behavior." Regulatory requirements related to discipline are found at 34 CFR 300.519 through 300.529. This section provides information related to classroom and behavioral management in general as well as disciplinary procedures used with students with disabilities. Discipline policies may impact dropout rate in that students who serve a large number of days of suspension, whether in-school-suspension (ISS) or out-of-school suspension (OSS), may not receive the same intensity of instruction that they would receive in the classroom. The opportunity to complete class assignments differs qualitatively from the opportunity to participate in classroom instructional activities, and will affect student achievement. In addition, frequent absences from school, whether due to suspensions, illness, or truancy, may affect a student's sense of the school setting as a welcoming environment. These are often factors in students' decisions to drop out.

At the high school level behavioral interventions reported by staff and documented in the sampling of behavior intervention plans reviewed on-site by the monitoring team included: phone calls to parents; talking to the student, a 10-minute time out in the ISS room; ISS for one or more periods per day; and, OSS. Hardee High School has two different kinds of ISS. One type is called Alternative Curriculum Environment (ACE) and is reported to be used for "local" or minor offenses which are not reported as in-school suspension to the DOE. The other is called ISS and is reported to be used for "state" or more significant offenses which are reported to DOE. The ISS rate reported in the districts 2003 LEA Profile was 0%. Staff reported that suspensions other than OSS were coded as ACE during the 2002-03 school year. Both ISS and ACE are served in the same room and class work is sent from the student's regularly scheduled classroom teacher.

Pioneer Career Academy (PCA) is an alternative school that is reported to be used as an alternative placement when all positive behavioral interventions at the student's home school

have been exhausted. However, interviews with district and school level administration and teachers from both PCA and Hardee High School indicated an inconsistent understanding of the guidelines and procedures for referring a student for placement at PCA. Staff reported a limited range of interventions implemented at Hardee High School before alternative placements are recommended. Some students with significant behavioral needs are being served, according to their IEPs, on a modified day schedule with no clear plan of return to a full day schedule. One such case study student was observed in one of two classes he attends daily. Although effective classroom management was observed during this classroom observation the teacher reported that this student is seldom in class due to repeated behavioral infractions that lead to removal to ISS. The only intervention listed on this student's behavior intervention plan is "meet privately with student" and accommodations on the IEP indicate a cooling off period will be used. This IEP changes him from five periods to two periods of instruction per day and states "due to behavior concerns will attend HHS half day beginning 2/6/04. As behavior improves, will readdress" This does not constitute a plan for re-entry since it does not specify what the student must do to be reinstated or a date the team will review this student's half day status. At the time this record was reviewed, the student had spent 17 of 48 class periods in the ISS room since being put on a modified day schedule.

Regarding long-term suspension or other change of placements of a student with a disability for disciplinary reasons, 34 CFR 300.523(a)(2) requires that the IEP team immediately, if possible, but in no case later than 10 school days after the date on which the decision is made to suspend or change the placement of the student, conduct a review of the relationship between the child's disability and the behavior subject to the disciplinary action. Through the case study process, records of students who have received ten or more cumulative days of OSS were reviewed, and staff were interviewed regarding the process of conducting manifestation determinations. While staff reported that the manifestation determination process for students with disabilities being considered for suspension is conducted, this process was not clearly documented in the records. If students are suspended, but not considered for expulsion, there is no documentation in the conference notes as to whether the behavior in question was determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability. Students suspended for a cumulative period of 10 or more days have a suspension conference; however, this generally takes place after the student has served their full suspension. The student's suspension record is then "wiped clean" and the 10 day suspension count begins again. As a result, some students' records indicated that students had received 20 to 30 days of suspension within a school year.

Overall, the teachers interviewed reported having few behavioral problems in their classes, however teachers at the high school revealed that infractions that lead to frequent ISS placement for students with disabilities generally occur while students are in transition from class to class, on the bus or once they are placed in ISS. Through review of student discipline records it was noted that many referrals were written for infractions such as being out of the assigned area, defiance of authority, and disrupting class after being assigned to ISS.

In summary, although the monitoring team noted effective classroom management in most classes observed, interviews with staff and reviews of school-level data on student referrals and suspensions indicates that disciplinary policy and procedures are an area of concern. All forms of in-school suspension (ISS and ACE) have not been reported consistently to DOE in the past. The

process of conducting manifestation determination meetings was not clearly documented in the case notes of students with a pattern of suspension, but who are not being expelled. At the time of the on-site visit there were students on modified-day schedules due to behavioral issues who did not have a specific plan for return documented in the IEP. The interventions in evidence through interviews and record reviews conducted at Hardee High School were limited to time-out, talking to the student, parent phone calls, and suspension.

### **Staff Development**

This section provides information related to staff development activities that directly target interventions to prevent students with disabilities from dropping out. A variety of staff development opportunities are available in Hardee County, although none directly state dropout prevention as the purpose. Teachers reported attending reading and math workshops specific to FCAT remediation. Several teachers reported participating in English for speakers of other language (ESOL) workshops and have used these strategies with their low performing students. The multi-agency Network for Students with Severe Emotional Disturbance (SEDNET) has offered workshops on “diffusing difficult students” and Florida Diagnostic Learning and Research System (FDLRS) and Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) have offered training on reading and classroom management. While many of these trainings focused on behavioral or classroom management issues, limited participation in these sessions was reported, and several respondents reported a need for staff development in this area.

### **Parental Involvement**

This section provides information related to parent involvement as it relates directly to the likelihood that a student with a disability will drop out of school. Attendance at IEP meetings is reported to be better than at other meetings in the district, although lack of transportation and inability to miss work are reportedly barriers to parent involvement. Of the 21 IEP’s reviewed, 10 parents attended the most recent IEP meeting for their child. For the parent survey, 57% of respondents indicated that their child’s school does all it can to keep students from dropping out. Fifty-nine percent indicated that the school sends home information about activities and workshops for parents.

### **Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities**

This section provides information related to respondents’ views on issues directly related to the dropout rate for students with disabilities. When asked their opinion on the likely contributors to dropout rate for students with disabilities in Hardee County, the following issues were cited most frequently:

- inaccurate data reporting that misrepresents the numbers of students who have actually dropped out (specifically DNE)
- strict attendance policies cause students to have to repeat courses; as a result, the students fall farther behind, and a sense of not progressing in school is fostered
- lack of access to successful vocational training opportunities, especially for students who are poor readers or who exhibit behavior problems
- students’ are able to gain employment without a high school diploma, so they drop out to get a job in order to help their families financially

- the level of poverty and the rural nature of the community do not support students staying in school

In summary, district and school level employees feel that the rural and economically disadvantaged status of families in Hardee County lead students to drop out in order to go to work to help their families financially, and inaccurate reporting specifically related to the counties DNE reporting skew the dropout data.

### **Services to Gifted Students**

This section provides information related to the provision of services to students identified as gifted as outlined in Florida State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.03019, F.A.C. Hardee County currently offers gifted services to approximately 100 eligible students. Hardee County provides services to gifted students in elementary, middle, and high school, through enrollment in special classes, consultative services, advanced courses at the high school level, and dual enrollment at South Florida Community College. The gifted program at Wauchula Elementary provides an enrichment pull-out program once a week and Hardee Jr. High gifted services are provided through a research based elective class one period per day. Hardee High School is continuing to develop its gifted program through a consultative model. Hardee County is currently addressing disproportionate representation of minority students in its continuous improvement plan for gifted students.

Identification procedures described by staff for referring students suspected of being gifted include parent and/or teacher recommendation, the use of a gifted characteristics checklist, and the use of the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (K-Bit) screening instrument. When the result of the screening indicates that a student may qualify, a formal evaluation is conducted. It was reported that the district is considering screening across second grade with the Naglieri screener. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents to the survey administered to parents of gifted students reported that they were satisfied with how quickly services were implemented following the initial request for an evaluation. It was reported that students are dismissed from the program if needs are being met in other ways, (i.e., general education or dual enrollment in the local community college) and this would be done at parent request. Students who no longer participate in the formal course offerings are served on a consultative basis if they choose to stay in the program.

Of the 31 parents of gifted students who responded to the parent survey, 66% indicated that they were satisfied with the gifted services their children receive. Eighty percent reported that their children are academically challenged in their gifted classes, although only 61% reporting that their children are academically challenged in their general education classes.

In summary, the needs of students identified as gifted in Hardee County are addressed in a range of placements including enrollment in special classes, consultative services or advanced courses at the high school level, and dual enrollment at South Florida Community College. The district is addressing the needs of the gifted students in Hardee County.

### **Services to ESE Students in DJJ Facilities**

This section provides information related to the provision of services to students with disabilities within the DJJ system. Bowling Green Youth Academy is a Level 6 facility currently serving 32 students, six of whom are students with disabilities. The average length of stay for students at this facility is six to nine months. The facility's principal, who also serves as the ESE teacher, acted as the point of contact.

The principal reported that a range of diploma options are available to students with disabilities, include special diploma option (Option 1) and standard diploma, and general education development (GED). The curriculum for students with disabilities focuses on reading, writing and math skills. Students either take the FCAT, an alternative assessment or chose not to take the FCAT because they are working toward a GED exit option. A variety of meaningful vocational experiences are also available to students with disabilities and they include horticulture, career research and, employability skills.

In summary, Bowling Green Youth Academy is a Level 6 DJJ facility which served six students with disabilities at the time of the visit. Students with disabilities may work toward a special or standard diploma, as well as the GED exit option. Basic reading, writing and math skills are emphasized in the curriculum. Students either take the FCAT, an alternative assessment or chose not to take the FCAT because they are working toward a GED exit option. Students with disabilities have access to meaningful vocational experiences while at this facility.

### **Additional Compliance**

In addition to monitoring categories related to the 2004 focused visit, the Bureau also conducted interviews related to the provision of speech and language services to students with disabilities who have communication needs, the provision of counseling as a related service, and transition services. This section provides information related to these supplemental categories of compliance. ESE teachers at all schools visited indicated that they write communication goals for students who have a need in the area of communication. If the ESE teachers need assistance with writing or implementing appropriate communication goals, they consult the speech/language pathologist.

It was reported that counseling services are provided to students with disabilities who are in need of such services. Mental health counseling is routinely provided by school guidance counselors, a mental health worker, who is contracted through the district ESE office, or a counselor from Peace River Mental Health Agency. However, record reviews and staff interviews indicated that student's receiving counseling did not have counseling indicated as a related service on their IEPs.

Transition services also were explored through the monitoring process. Of the 21 IEPs randomly selected, three required transition be addressed. One of three students did not attend their transition IEP meeting, nor was there an indication that they gave input into this meeting. Of the three transition IEPs only one was over 16 and it was determined that he did not require agency participation. The Association of Retarded Citizens (ARC) and South Florida Community College (SFCC) are two agencies working with the Hardee County school district to provide transition services to students with disabilities. In the past, Hardee County ARC had begun

working with students at age 16, but due to the lack of capacity to serve all that need their services, they now evaluate and serve students starting at age 21.

In summary, students in Hardee County with communication needs are being addressed by ESE teachers through communication and instructional goals on their IEPs. Students who have counseling needs are met through a variety of models. Students needs in the area of counseling appear to be addressed; however, counseling was not included as a related service on the IEPs reviewed. Transition services for students who require agency participation in Hardee County are addressed through the ARC and SFCC, among other agencies.

### **Student Record Reviews**

This section provides information related to student record reviews. A total of 31 student records, randomly selected from the population of exceptional students in Hardee County, were reviewed for compliance. The records were sent to the DOE for review by Bureau staff prior to the on-site visit. The review included: 15 IEPs for students with disabilities, excluding students eligible as “speech only”; two IEPs for students eligible as speech impaired; two IEPs for students eligible for low-incidence disabilities; two IEPs for students from the DJJ facility; and, 10 EPs for students identified as gifted. Hardee County does not currently have any charter schools. The sample group included records of 13 elementary students, six middle school students, and two high school students.

During the formal record reviews carried out as a part of the focused monitoring procedures, 21 individual educational plans (IEPs) were reviewed for compliance. There were no findings of noncompliance that resulted in a funding adjustment, nor were there findings of noncompliance that resulted in IEP teams needing to be reconvened. Systemic findings are those that occur at a sufficient enough frequency that the monitoring team could reasonably infer a system-wide problem (25%). There was one area of a systemic finding of noncompliance on the IEPs reviewed, and individual findings were noted in 13 additional areas. The single systemic area of noncompliance was:

- lack of transition indicated as a purpose of the meeting for students 14 or older or in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade (three of five records randomly chosen requiring a transition component)

The following represent items of individual or non-systemic findings:

- inadequate short term objectives or benchmarks (3)
- lack of explanation of the extent to which the student will not participate with nondisabled student in regular class (3)
- lack of indication that a student in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade or 14 years old participated or gave input into their transition IEP meeting (2)
- lack of measurable annual goals (2)
- lack of indication that a general education teacher participated in the IEP meeting (1)
- lack of a statement indicating how the student’s disability affects the students involvement and progress in the general curriculum (1)
- lack of an explanation of the extent to which the student will not participate with nondisabled peers (1)

- “when contracted” used to describe frequency of related services (1)
- lack of correspondence between the students goals and objectives and the needs identified in the present level of educational performance (1)
- lack of correspondence among special education services, location and time with nondisabled students (1)
- lack of program accommodations and/or modifications being addressed (1)
- lack of communication needs addressed on the IEP (1)
- lack of specially designed P.E. services indicated on the IEP (1)

EPs for gifted 10 students were reviewed for compliance. One EP did not include a psychologist even though this was an initial staffing and the results of evaluation results were discussed. Hardee County’s Special Programs and Procedures Manual (SP&P) states that a psychologist must be present if evaluation results are to be discussed. All other EPs were found to be in compliance.

One record of a student reported at the 254 matrix funding level was reviewed at Hardee Junior High School. The IEP supported the services reported on the matrix, and the services were in evidence during the classroom observation and through an interview with the teacher.

Additional information regarding these findings has been provided to the district under separate cover.

In summary, no IEPs were required to be reconvened and there were no funding adjustments. There was one systemic finding of noncompliance in the area of transition, and individual findings on IEPs were noted in 13 additional areas. One initial eligibility meeting for a gifted student did not include all of the participants required under district guidelines.

### **District Forms Review**

This section provides information related to district forms review. Forms representing the thirteen areas identified below were submitted to Bureau staff for a review to determine compliance with federal and state laws. Findings were noted in one area on the current forms, with changes required on five of the forms that included this same language. The forms were revised and submitted to the Bureau for review prior to the dissemination of this report. The following reflects the review of forms currently in use:

- *Notification of Individual Educational Plan Meeting*
- *IEP forms*
- *Informed Notice of Consent for Evaluation*
- *Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation*
- *Notice and Consent for Initial Placement\**
- *Notification of Change of Placement\**
- *Notification of Change of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)\**
- *Informed Notice of Refusal\**
- *Notice of Dismissal*
- *Notice of Ineligibility\**
- *Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination*

- *Annual Notice of Confidentiality*
- *Procedural Safeguards*

\* indicates findings that require immediate attention

The district was notified of the specific findings via a separate letter dated April 29, 2004. A detailed explanation of the specific findings may be found in appendix D.

In summary, findings were noted in one area on the current forms, with changes required on five of the forms that included this same language.

### **System Improvement Plan**

In response to these findings, the district is required to develop a system improvement plan for submission to the Bureau. This plan must include activities and strategies intended to address specific findings, as well as measurable evidence of change. In developing the system improvement plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement activities resulting from this focused monitoring report to the district's continuous improvement plan. Following is the format for the system improvement plan, including a listing of the critical issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement.

During the course of conducting the focused monitoring activities, including daily debriefings with the monitoring team and district staff, it is often the case that suggestions and/or recommendations related to interventions or strategies are proposed. Listings of these recommendations as well as specific discretionary projects and DOE contacts available to provide technical assistance to the district in the development and implementation of the plan are included following the plan format.



## Hardee County School District Focused Monitoring System Improvement Plan

This section includes the issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement. The district is required to provide system improvement strategies to address identified findings, which may include an explanation of specific activities the district has committed to implementing, or it may consist of a broader statement describing planned strategies. For each issue, the plan also must define the measurable evidence of whether or not the desired outcome has been achieved. Target dates that extend for more than one year should include benchmarks in order to track interim progress. Findings identified as “ESE” are those findings that reflect issues specific to ESE students. Findings identified as “All” are those findings that reflect issues related to the student population as a whole, including ESE students.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Administration and Policy	Student withdrawal codes are not routinely corrected to reflect actual status.		X	The district will request a Data Quality Review from Education Information and Accountability Services at the DOE to ensure that withdrawal codes are coded and edited accurately.	
	Hardee High School does not have a child study team procedure in place to address chronic nonattendance.		X	The district will develop and implement a procedure to ensure that all students who are absent five or more instances in a month or 10 or more instances in a 90 day period are served by a child study team.	
Curriculum and Instruction	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				
Discipline and Classroom Management	ISS and ACE are two models of in-school-suspension in the district; ACE is not reported to		X	Establish procedures to ensure that all in-school-suspensions are reported accurately to the DOE.	

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Discipline and Classroom Management (continued)	DOE as days of suspension.				
	There is no statement of the result of a manifestation determination meeting; it is unclear if a student's action was found to be a manifestation or not.	X		The district will review its procedures for conducting manifestation determination meetings to ensure the proper procedures are followed. Forms used to guide and document the manifestation determination process have been revised and are being evaluated to determine if additional revisions are required. Submitted to the Bureau prior to dissemination of this report.	
	Students are placed on modified-day schedules for behavioral issues with no documented plan for return to a regular day.	X		IEP teams will reconvene to review the IEPs of any students currently served on modified-day schedules as a result of behavioral issues to ensure that a plan of return is included. The IEP team will review students' positive behavioral intervention plans to ensure that strategies that have a good "expectancy" of being effective are implemented, including information on replacement behaviors.	
Staff Development	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Parental Involvement	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				
Gifted Services	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				
Services in DJJ Facilities	No findings of noncompliance in this area.				
Additional Compliance Areas	Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No findings of noncompliance in this area.</li> </ul>	X			
	Counseling as a Related Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although counseling is provided to students with disabilities through a variety of sources, it is not documented on the IEP as a related service.</li> </ul>			The district will be required to review listings of the students with disabilities receiving counseling as a related service and ensure those services are documented on the IEP.	
	Transition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No findings of noncompliance in this area.</li> </ul>				
Record Reviews	There were no findings of noncompliance requiring a funding adjustment or reconvening of the IEP teams.				
	A systemic finding on IEPs was identified in the following area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of identification of transition as the purpose of the meeting</li> </ul>	X		The district will provide training to include transition as a purpose for the meeting for students 14 years or older or in the 8 <sup>th</sup> grade or higher.	
	There were nonsystemic findings of noncompliance on 13 specific				

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Record Reviews (continued)	items on individual IEPs. There were no findings related to matrix reviews.				
Forms Review	Forms used to document the following activities must be revised to include a statement of where a copy of the procedural safeguards may be found: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</i></li> <li>• <i>Informed Notice of Change of Placement</i></li> <li>• <i>Informed Notice of Change of FAPE</i></li> <li>• <i>Informed Notice of Refusal</i></li> <li>• <i>Informed Notice of Ineligibility</i></li> </ul>	X		Forms were revised and submitted to the Bureau for review.	Completed prior to dissemination of this report.

## Recommendations and Technical Assistance

As a result of the focused monitoring activities conducted in Hardee County during the week of March 15, 2004, the Bureau has identified specific findings related to dropout rate for students with disabilities in the district. The following are recommendations for the district to consider when developing the system improvement plan and determining strategies that are most likely to effect change. The list is not all-inclusive, and is intended only as a starting point for discussion among the parties responsible for the development of the plan. A partial listing of technical assistance resources is also provided. These resources may be of assistance in the development and/or implementation of the system improvement plan.

### Recommendations

- Develop dropout retrieval activities to be implemented in the district.
- Request a Data Quality Review from Education Information and Accountability Services at the DOE to ensure that withdrawals are coded and edited appropriately
- Complete the semi-annual dropout match activities.
- Consider the identified target population when collecting data and implementing strategies (9<sup>th</sup> grade, SLD students).
- Conduct school-level analyses of discipline data to address questions such as:
  - ✓ Are there policies in place for some infractions that have unintended consequences (e.g., If a student receives two days of OSS for skipping school for one day, the result is actually three days of missed instruction).
  - ✓ Are some interventions or consequences more effective than others in changing student behavior?
  - ✓ Do instructional practices in the in-school suspension (ISS) setting promote student learning, especially for students with disabilities, or are they primarily designed for independent task completion and skill maintenance?
  - ✓ Hardee High School develop and use CST in accordance with State Board Rule 1003.26(b)(c) to develop strategies to address attendance problems.
  - ✓ All in-school suspension, including ACE, be reported as ISS to DOE and interventions in the ESE and general education classes are developed and implemented prior to seeking alternative placements for students.
  - ✓ An analysis of school- and student-level data related to types of infractions and consequences reported, and the specific students or staff members involved, would be useful to the district in the development of a strategy to address the high discipline rates across the district.
- Increase behavioral and technical assistance support to schools and staff.
  - ✓ Implement a Positive Behavioral Support System at the high school
  - ✓ Apply for and implement the GED exit option
  - ✓ Collaborate with school-level administration to ensure that teachers in need of target training, (i.e., classroom management) participate in such trainings when it is offered.

## **Technical Assistance**

### **Florida Inclusion Network**

Website: <http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com/>

The project provides learning opportunities, consultation, information and support to educators, families, and community members, resulting in the inclusion of all students. They provide technical assistance on literacy strategies, curriculum adaptations, suggestions for resource allocations and expanding models of service delivery, positive behavioral supports, ideas on differentiating instruction, and suggestions for building and maintaining effective school teams.

### **Florida's Positive Behavioral Supports Project**

(813) 974-6440

Fax: (813) 974-6115

<http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/flpbs/>

This project is designed to support teachers, administrators, related services personnel, family members, and outside agency personnel in building district-wide capacity to address challenging behavior exhibited by students general education and special education programs. It provides training and technical assistance for districts, schools, and individual teams in all levels of positive behavior support (individual, classroom and school-wide).

## **Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

In addition to the special projects described above, Bureau staff is available for assistance on a variety of topics. Following is a partial list of contacts.

### **Dropout Prevention and Academic Intervention**

Mary Jo Butler

Michael Lisle

(850) 245-0479

### **Education Information and Accountability Services**

Lavan Dukes, Bureau Chief

(850) 245-0400

e-mail: <mailto:askeias@fldoe.org>

### **Compliance**

Eileen Amy

April Katine

Kim Komisar

Barbara McAnelly

Angela Nathaniel

Anitra Moreland

(850) 245-0475

### **Clearinghouse Information Center**

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

### **Behavior/Discipline**

Lee Clark, EH/SED

(850) 245-0478

**APPENDIX A:**  
**DISTRICT DATA**







FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

## 2004 LEA PROFILE

JIM HORNE, COMMISSIONER

DISTRICT:	<b>HARDEE</b>	PK-12 POPULATION:	<b>4,970</b>
ENROLLMENT GROUP:	<b>LESS THAN 7,000</b>	PERCENT DISABLED:	<b>21%</b>
		PERCENT GIFTED:	<b>2%</b>

### INTRODUCTION

The LEA profile is intended to provide districts with a tool for use in planning for systemic improvement. The profile contains a series of data indicators that describe measures of educational benefit, educational environment, and prevalence for exceptional students. The data are presented for the district, their enrollment group (districts of comparable size), and the state. Where appropriate and available, comparative data for general education students are included.

Data presented as indicators of educational benefit (*Section One*)

- Graduation rates for students with disabilities receiving standard diplomas through meeting all graduation requirements, GED Exit Option, and FCAT waivers
- Dropout rates
- Post-school outcome data
- Third grade promotion and retention, including good cause promotions

*Note: FCAT participation and performance data formerly included in the LEA profile will be published separately in Fall 2004.*

Data presented as indicators of educational environment (*Section Two*)

- Regular class, resource room, and separate class placement, ages 6-21
- Early childhood setting or home, part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education setting and early childhood special education setting, ages 3-5
- Discipline rates

Data presented as indicators of prevalence (*Section Three*)

- Student membership by race/ethnicity
- Gifted membership by free/reduced lunch and limited English proficiency (LEP) status
- Student membership in selected disabilities by race/ethnicity
- Selected disabilities as a percentage of all disabilities and as a percentage of total PK-12 population

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**LEA PROFILE 2004**

Three of the indicators included in the profile, graduation rate, dropout rate, and regular class placement, are also used in the selection of districts for focused monitoring. Indicators describing the prevalence and separate class placement of students identified as educable mentally handicapped (EMH) are included to correspond with provisions of the Bureau's partnership agreement with the Office for Civil Rights.

**DATA SOURCES**

The data contained in this profile were obtained from data submitted electronically by districts through the Department of Education Information Database in surveys 2, 9, 3, and 5 and through the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP).

**DISTRICTS IN HARDEE'S ENROLLMENT GROUP:**

Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, DeSoto, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Glades, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Holmes, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Sumter, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Wakulla, Walton, Washington



## SECTION ONE: EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT

Educational benefit refers to the extent to which children benefit from their educational experience. Progression through and completion of school are dimensions of educational benefits as are post-school outcomes and indicators of consumer satisfaction. This section of the profile provides data on indicators of student progression, school completion, and post-school outcomes.

### STANDARD DIPLOMA STUDENTS MEETING ALL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:

The number of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma (withdrawal code W06) divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education (withdrawal codes W06-W10, W27, WGD, WFW, WFT) as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Hardee	25%	37%	45%
Enrollment Group	42%	41%	44%
State	51%	48%	45%

### STANDARD DIPLOMA THROUGH GED EXIT OPTION:

The number of students with disabilities in a GED Exit Option Model who passed the GED Tests and the FCAT or HSCT and were awarded a standard high school diploma (withdrawal code W10) divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education (withdrawal codes W06-W10, W27, WGD, WFW, WFT) as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Hardee	0%	0%	0%
Enrollment Group	2%	2%	2%
State	1%	1%	1%

### STANDARD DIPLOMA THROUGH FCAT WAIVER:

The number of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma through the FCAT waiver (withdrawal code WFW) divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education (withdrawal codes W06-W10, W27, WGD, WFW, WFT) as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for **2002-03**, the first year waivers were available.

	2002-03
Hardee	6%
Enrollment Group	8%
State	9%

**DROPOUT RATE:**

The number of students grades 9-12 for whom a dropout withdrawal reason (DNE, W05, W11, W13-W23) was reported, divided by the total enrollment of grade 9-12 students and students who did not enter school as expected (DNEs) as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities, gifted students, all PK-12 students, students identified as EH/SED, and students identified as SLD for the years **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	Students with Disabilities			Gifted Students			All Students		
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Hardee	5%	6%	11%	0%	0%	0%	7%	7%	6%
Enrollment Group	5%	5%	5%	<1%	<1%	0%	4%	3%	3%
State	5%	5%	4%	<1%	<1%	<1%	4%	3%	3%

	EH/SED			SLD		
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Hardee	10%	0%	14%	5%	8%	11%
Enrollment Group	7%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
State	9%	7%	7%	5%	5%	4%

**POSTSCHOOL OUTCOME DATA:**

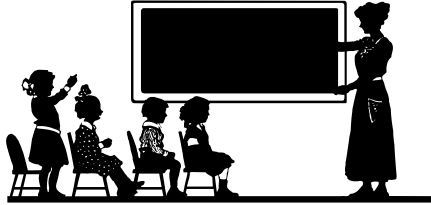
The Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) is an interagency data collection system that obtains follow-up data on former students. The most recent FETPIP data available reports on students who exited Florida public schools during the **2001-02** school year. The table below displays percent of students with disabilities and students identified as gifted exiting school in 2001-02 who were found employed between October and December 2002 or in continuing education (enrolled for the fall or preliminary winter/spring semester) in 2002.

	Students with Disabilities		Gifted Students	
	Employed	Cont. Ed.	Employed	Cont. Ed.
Hardee	36%	17%	0%	0%
Enrollment Group	39%	16%	60%	70%
State	45%	20%	38%	72%

**THIRD GRADE PROMOTION AND RETENTION RATE:**

The number of third grade students promoted, promoted with cause, and retained divided by the total year enrollment as reported in end of year (survey 5). The percent of students promoted with cause is a subset of total promoted. Total enrollment is the count of all students who attended school at any time during the school year. The results are reported for third grade students with disabilities and all third grade students for **2002-03**.

	2002-03					
	Students with Disabilities			All Students		
	Promoted	Promoted with Cause	Retained	Promoted	Promoted with Cause	Retained
Hardee	80%	22%	20%	82%	10%	18%
Enrollment Group	74%	19%	26%	85%	6%	15%
State	74%	17%	26%	85%	6%	15%



## SECTION TWO: EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Educational environment refers to the extent to which students with disabilities receive special education and related services in natural environments, classes or schools with their nondisabled peers. This section of the profile provides data on indicators of educational environments.

### REGULAR CLASS, RESOURCE ROOM AND SEPARATE CLASS PLACEMENT, AGES 6-21:

The number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 in regular class, resource room, and separate class placement divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 reported in December (survey 9). Regular class includes students who spend 80 percent or more of their school week with nondisabled peers. Resource room includes students spending between 40 and 80 percent of their school week with nondisabled peers. Separate class includes students spending less than 40 percent of their week with nondisabled peers. The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2001-02** through **2003-04**.

	Regular Class			Resource Room			Separate Class		
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Hardee	50%	56%	55%	26%	20%	21%	23%	22%	22%
Enrollment Group	46%	49%	52%	27%	27%	25%	20%	18%	16%
State	48%	48%	50%	26%	26%	24%	22%	22%	22%

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTINGS, AGES 3-5:

The number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 who are served in early childhood settings, part-time early childhood and part-time early childhood special education settings, and early childhood special education settings divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 reported in December (survey 9). Students in early childhood settings receive all (100%) of their special education and related services in educational programs designed primarily for children without disabilities or in their home. Students in part-time early childhood and part-time early childhood special education settings receive special education and related services in multiple settings. Students in early childhood special education settings receive all (100%) of their special education and related services in educational programs designed primarily for children with disabilities housed in regular school buildings or other community-based settings. The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2001-02** through **2003-04**.

	Early Childhood Setting or Home			Part-Time Early Childhood/ Part-Time Early Childhood Special Education Setting			Early Childhood Special Education Setting		
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Hardee	0%	1%	9%	95%	89%	83%	0%	5%	3%
Enrollment Group	10%	10%	16%	67%	68%	62%	20%	19%	21%
State	7%	7%	7%	59%	57%	57%	30%	31%	31%

**SEPARATE CLASS PLACEMENT OF EMH STUDENTS, AGES 6-21:**

The number of students ages 6-21 identified as educable mentally handicapped who spend less than 40 percent of their day with nondisabled peers divided by the total number of EMH students reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for three years from **2001-02** through **2003-04**.

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Hardee	66%	63%	57%
Enrollment Group	56%	49%	47%
State	62%	61%	62%

**DISCIPLINE RATES:**

The number of students who served in-school or out-of-school suspensions, were expelled, or moved to alternative placement at any time during the school year divided by the total year enrollment as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities and nondisabled students for **2002-03**.

		2002-03							
		In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions		Alternative Placement*	
		Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students	Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students	Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students	Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students
Hardee		3%	<1%	11%	4%	<1%	<1%	0%	0%
Enrollment Group		15%	11%	13%	8%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
State		13%	8%	14%	7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

\* Student went through expulsion process but was offered alternative placement.



### SECTION THREE: PREVALENCE

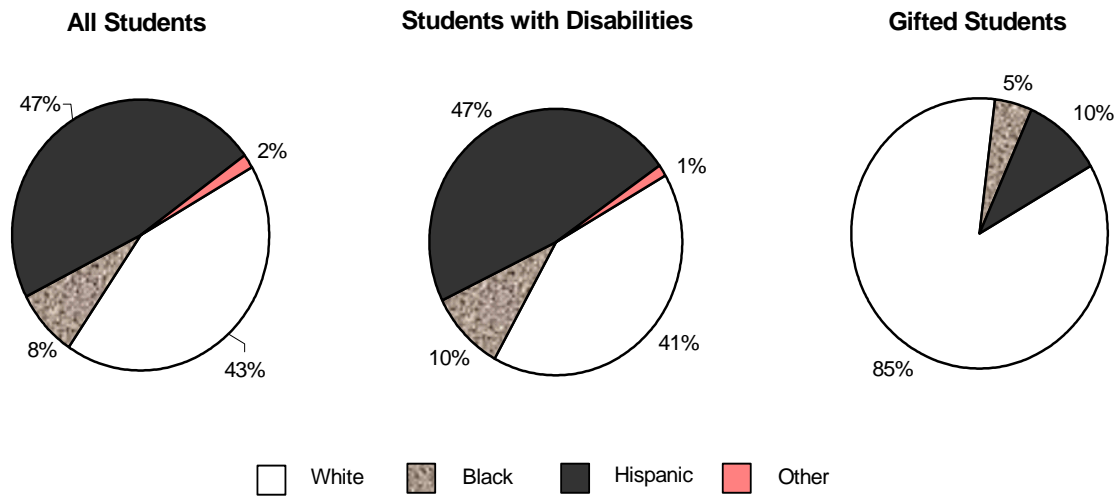
Prevalence refers to the proportion of the PK-12 population identified as exceptional at any given point in time. This section of the profile provides prevalence data by demographic characteristics.

#### STUDENT MEMBERSHIP BY RACIAL/ETHNIC CATEGORY:

The three columns on the left show the statewide racial/ethnic distribution for all PK-12 students, all students with disabilities, and all gifted students as reported in **October 2003** (survey 2). Statewide, there is a larger percentage of black students in the disabled population than in the total PK-12 population (28 percent vs. 24 percent) and a smaller percentage of black students in the gifted population (10 percent vs. 24 percent). Similar data for the district are reported in the three right-hand columns and displayed in the graphs.

	State			District		
	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Gifted Students	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Gifted Students
White	50%	51%	64%	43%	41%	85%
Black	24%	28%	10%	8%	10%	5%
Hispanic	22%	18%	19%	47%	47%	10%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	<1%	4%	<1%	<1%	0%
Am Ind/Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	0%
Multiracial	2%	2%	3%	<1%	<1%	0%

District Membership by Race/Ethnicity



**FREE/REDUCED LUNCH AND LEP:**

The percent of all students and all gifted students in the district and the state on free/reduced lunch. The percent of all students and all gifted students in the district and in the state who are identified as limited English proficient (LEP). These percentages are based on data reported in **October 2003** (survey 2).

	State		District	
	All Students	Gifted Students	All Students	Gifted Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	44%	21%	69%	26%
LEP	11%	3%	12%	<1%

**SELECTED DISABILITIES BY RACIAL/ETHNIC CATEGORY:**

Racial/ethnic data for all students as well as students with a primary disability of specific learning disabled (SLD), emotionally handicapped or severely emotionally disturbed (EH/SED), and educable mentally handicapped (EMH) are presented below. The data are presented for the state and the district as reported in **October 2003** (survey 2).

	All Students		SLD		EH/SED		EMH	
	State	District	State	District	State	District	State	District
White	50%	43%	52%	43%	48%	59%	32%	33%
Black	24%	8%	24%	9%	39%	29%	52%	15%
Hispanic	22%	47%	21%	47%	11%	10%	13%	50%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	<1%	<1%
Am Ind/Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	<1%	0%	<1%	0%
Multiracial	2%	<1%	2%	<1%	2%	1%	1%	<1%

**SELECTED DISABILITIES AS PERCENT OF DISABLED AND PK-12 POPULATIONS:**

The percentage of the total disabled population and the total population identified as SLD, EH/SED, EMH, and speech impaired (SI) for the district and the state. Statewide, seven percent of the total population is identified as SLD and 46 percent of all students with disabilities are SLD. The data are presented for the district and state as reported in **October 2003** (survey 2).

	All Students		All Disabled	
	State	District	State	District
SLD	7%	11%	46%	55%
EH/SED	1%	1%	9%	7%
EMH	1%	2%	7%	11%
SI	2%	2%	14%	12%



**Jim Horne, Commissioner**



**Department of Education  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services  
2004 Focused Monitoring**

**Districts Rank-Ordered on Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities**

District	Dropout Rate	Rank
Lafayette	13.5%	1
Hardee	11.4%	2
Lee	11.1%	3
Glades	9.2%	4
Levy	8.6%	5
Citrus	7.8%	6
Sumter	7.5%	7
Highlands	7.3%	8
Okeechobee	7.1%	9
Bradford	6.5%	10
Lake	6.4%	11
Wakulla	6.3%	12
Suwannee	6.2%	13
Collier	6.1%	14
Polk	5.9%	15
Sarasota	5.9%	16
Duval	5.8%	17
Hendry	5.8%	18
Pinellas	5.8%	19
Gadsden	5.7%	20
Baker	5.6%	21
Gilchrist	5.5%	22
Monroe	5.4%	23
Hillsborough	5.3%	24
Pasco	5.2%	25
Taylor	5.2%	26
Marion	5.1%	27
Dixie	4.9%	28
Indian River	4.9%	29
Jefferson	4.9%	30
Washington	4.9%	31
Miami Dade	4.8%	32
Holmes	4.8%	33
Okaloosa	4.8%	34

District	Dropout Rate	Rank
Gulf	4.7%	35
Jackson	4.7%	36
Escambia	4.5%	37
Palm Beach	4.5%	38
Calhoun	4.3%	39
St. Johns	4.2%	40
Hernando	4.0%	41
Charlotte	3.8%	42
Clay	3.7%	43
Franklin	3.7%	44
Orange	3.7%	45
Osceola	3.7%	46
Hamilton	3.6%	47
Nassau	3.6%	48
Leon	3.3%	49
Putnam	3.3%	50
Union	3.3%	51
Alachua	2.9%	52
Volusia	2.7%	53
DeSoto	2.6%	54
St. Lucie	2.6%	55
Manatee	2.5%	56
Santa Rosa	2.5%	57
Seminole	2.5%	58
Bay	2.2%	59
Walton	1.9%	60
Columbia	1.8%	61
Martin	1.8%	62
Brevard	1.7%	63
Broward	1.2%	64
Flagler	1.1%	65
Madison	0.6%	66
Liberty	0.0%	67
District Total	4.5%	



**APPENDIX B:**  
**ESE MONITORING TEAM MEMBERS**



**Hardee County School District  
Focused Monitoring Visit  
March 15-17, 2004**

**ESE Monitoring Team Members**

**Department of Education Staff**

Michele Polland, Acting Chief, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services  
Eileen Amy, Administrator, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Kim Komisar, Program Director, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Rhonda Blake, Program Specialist, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
David Katcher, Program Specialist, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
April Katine, Program Specialist, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Dawn Sanders, Program Specialist, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance

**Peer Reviewers**

Kim Dotts-Hoehlne, P. K. Yonge Developmental Lab School

**Contracted Staff**

Batya Elbaum, Project Director, University of Miami  
Emily Joseph, University of Miami  
Adalis Sanchez, University of Miami  
Christopher Sarno, University of Miami



**APPENDIX C:**  
**SURVEY RESULTS**





**Hardee County School District  
Parent Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities**

The Parent Survey was sent to parents of the 1067 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 115 parents (PK, n = 3; K-5, n = 57; 6-8, n = 35; 9 - 12, n = 20) representing 11% of the sample, returned the survey. Eighty-eight surveys were returned as undeliverable, representing 8% of the sample. Parents represented the following students with disabilities: educable mentally handicapped, orthopedically impaired, speech impaired, language impaired, emotionally handicapped, specific learning disabled, hospital/homebound, profoundly mentally handicapped, autistic, developmentally delayed, and other health impaired.

**% Always,  
Almost Always,  
Frequently combined**

**Overall, I am satisfied with:**

- the way I am treated by school personnel. 81
- the amount of time my child spends with regular education students 79
- the level of knowledge and experience of school personnel. 76
- the way special education teachers and regular education teachers work together. 74
- the effect of exceptional student education on my child's self-esteem. 72
- how quickly services are implemented following an IEP (Individual Educational Plan) decision. 73
- the exceptional education services my child receives. 72
- my child's academic progress. 66

**My child:**

- has friends at school. 85
- is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 78
- receives all the special education and related services on his/her IEP. 76
- is happy at school. 68
- spends most of the school day involved in productive activities. 67

**At my child's IEP meetings we have talked about:**

- all of my child's needs. 88
- ways that my child could spend time with students in regular classes. 71
- whether my child should get accommodations (special testing conditions), for example, extra time. 65
- whether my child would take the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test). 60
- whether my child needed speech/language services. 55
- which diploma my child may receive.\* 53

**% Always,  
Almost Always,  
Frequently combined**

- whether my child needed services beyond the regular school year. 50
- whether my child needed transportation. 41
- the requirements for different diplomas.\* 38
- whether my child needed psychological counseling services. 36
- whether my child needed physical and/or occupational therapy. 35

**My child’s teachers:**

- are available to speak with me. 88
- expect my child to succeed. 83
- set appropriate goals for my child. 81
- call me or send me notes about my child. 68
- give homework that meets my child’s needs. 67
- give students with disabilities extra time or different assignments, if needed. 64

**My child’s school:**

- encourages me to participate in my child’s education. 74
- encourages acceptance of students with disabilities. 68
- wants to hear my ideas. 68
- makes sure I understand my child’s IEP. 68
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 68
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child’s IEP. 65
- offers students with disabilities the classes they need to graduate with a standard diploma. 65
- addresses my child’s individual needs. 64
- offers a variety of vocational courses, such as computers and business technology.\* 61
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 60
- provides students with disabilities updated books and materials. 59
- involves students with disabilities in clubs, sports, or other activities. 58
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 58
- does all it can to keep students from dropping out of school. 56
- provides information to students about education and jobs after high school.\* 52
- informed me, beginning when my child turned 14, that one purpose of the IEP meeting was to discuss a plan for my child’s transition out of high school.\* 40

**Parent Participation**

- I have attended my child’s IEP meetings. 87
- I meet with my child’s teachers to discuss my child’s needs and progress. 85
- I am comfortable talking about my child with school staff. 83
- I participate in school activities with my child. 56
- I have heard about the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (“FDLRS”) and the services they provide to families of children with disabilities. 36

**% Always,  
Almost Always,  
Frequently combined**

- I attend meetings of the PTA/PTO. 24
- I attend meetings of organizations for parents of students with disabilities. 21
- I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement. 18
- I have used parent support services in my area. 18

**Hardee County School District  
Parent Survey Report  
Students Identified as Gifted**

The Parent Survey was sent to parents of the 108 students identified as gifted for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 31 parents (KG-5, n = 16; 6-8, n = 12; 9 - 12, n = 3) representing 29% of the sample, returned the survey. Three surveys were returned as undeliverable, representing 3% of the sample.

**% Yes**

**Overall I am satisfied with:**

- the effect of gifted services on my child’s self-esteem. 79
- how quickly services were implemented following an initial request for evaluation. 79
- regular teachers’ subject area knowledge. 79
- my child’s academic progress. 77
- gifted teachers’ subject area knowledge. 76
- gifted teachers’ expertise in teaching students identified as gifted. 76
- the gifted services my child receives. 66
- regular teachers’ expertise in teaching students identified as gifted. 62

**In regular classes, my child:**

- has friends at school. 100
- is usually happy at school. 90
- has his/her social and emotional needs met at school. 90
- is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 83
- has creative outlets at school. 68
- is academically challenged at school. 61

**In gifted classes, my child:**

- has friends at school. 100
- has his/her social and emotional needs met at school. 96
- is usually happy at school. 96
- is academically challenged at school. 80
- has creative outlets at school. 77
- is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 76

**My child’s regular teachers:**

- expect appropriate behavior. 97
- are available to speak with me. 93
- set appropriate goals for my child. 78
- provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups. 70

**% Yes**

- give homework that meets my child's needs. 69
- relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits. 58
- have access to the latest information and technology. 57
- call me or send me notes about my child. 53

**My child's gifted teachers:**

- expect appropriate behavior. 100
- are available to speak with me. 91
- set appropriate goals for my child. 80
- give homework that meets my child's needs. 75
- relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits. 72
- have access to the latest information and technology. 68
- provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups. 67
- call me or send me notes about my child. 58

**My child's home school:**

- treats me with respect. 86
- encourages me to participate in my child's education. 85
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 82
- involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP). 68
- wants to hear my ideas. 67
- makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP. 64
- implements my ideas. 58
- addresses my child's individual needs. 57
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP. 57
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 46
- provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials. 38
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 37

**My child's 2nd school:**

- treats me with respect. 100
- addresses my child's individual needs. 89
- provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials. 89
- encourages me to participate in my child's education. 86
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 86
- implements my ideas. 67
- wants to hear my ideas. 57
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 33

**% Yes**

- makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP. 33
- involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP). 25
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 22
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP. 11

**The following questions relate primarily to high school students.**

**Student identified as gifted:**

- are provided with career counseling. 80
- have the option of taking a variety of vocational courses. 60
- are provided with information about options for education after high school. 60
- are provided with the opportunity to participate in externships or mentorships. 60

**Parent Participation**

- I participate in school activities with my child. 87
- I have attended one or more meetings about my child during this school year. 84
- I am a member of the PTA/PTO. 30
- I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement. 24
- I belong to an organization for parents of students identified as gifted. 3
- I have used parent support services in my area. 3

**Hardee County School District  
2004 Student Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities**

In order to obtain the perspective of students with disabilities who receive services from public school districts, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a student survey as part of the Bureau's focused monitoring activities.

In conjunction with the 2004 Hardee County School District monitoring activities, a sufficient number of surveys were provided to allow all students with disabilities, grades 9-12, to respond. Instructions for administration of the survey by classroom teachers, including a written script, were provided for each class or group of students. Since participation in this survey is not appropriate for some students whose disabilities might impair their understanding of the survey, professional judgment is to be used to determine appropriate participation.

We received 82 surveys representing approximately 35% of students with disabilities in grades 9-12 in the district. Data are from 2 (50%) of the district's 4 schools with students in grades 9-12.

**% Yes**

**I am taking the following ESE classes:**

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| • Electives (physical education, art, music) | 59 |
| • Science                                    | 43 |
| • English                                    | 32 |
| • Math                                       | 30 |
| • Social Studies                             | 25 |
| • Vocational (woodshop, computers)           | 13 |

**At my school:**

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| • ESE teachers believe that ESE students can learn.                          | 84 |
| • ESE teachers give students extra help, if needed.                          | 82 |
| • ESE teachers understand ESE students' needs.                               | 80 |
| • ESE teachers teach students in ways that help them learn.                  | 80 |
| • ESE teachers give students extra time or different assignments, if needed. | 78 |
| • ESE teachers teach students things that will be useful later on in life.   | 71 |
| • ESE teachers provide ESE students with updated books and materials.        | 69 |

**I am taking the following regular/mainstream classes:**

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| • Math                                       | 72 |
| • English                                    | 61 |
| • Science                                    | 61 |
| • Electives (physical education, art, music) | 60 |
| • Social Studies                             | 54 |
| • Vocational (woodshop, computers)           | 54 |

**At my school:**

- Regular education teachers believe that ESE students can learn. 78
- Regular education teachers give ESE students extra help if needed. 77
- Regular education teachers teach ESE students things that will be useful later on in life. 74
- Regular education teachers teach ESE students in ways that help them learn. 70
- Regular education teachers understand ESE students' needs. 69
- Regular education teachers provide students with updated books and materials. 63
- Regular education teachers give ESE students extra time or different assignments if needed. 61

**At my school, ESE students:**

- get the help they need to well in school. 86
- are treated fairly by teachers and staff. 82
- fit in at school. 80
- can take vocational classes such as computers and business technology. 79
- participate in clubs, sports, and other activities. 79
- get work experience (on-the-job training) if they are interested. 78
- are encouraged to stay in school. 78
- spend enough time with regular education students. 76
- get information about education after high school. 75

**Diploma Option**

- I know the difference between a regular and a special diploma. 85
- I know what courses I have to take to get my diploma. 84
- I agree with the type of diploma I am going to receive. 73
- I will probably graduate with a regular diploma. 65
- I had a say in the decision about which diploma I would get. 61

**IEP meeting**

- I was invited to attend my IEP meeting this year. 71
- I had a say in the decision about which classes I would take. 67
- I attended my IEP meeting this year. 58
- I had a say in the decision about special testing conditions I might get for the FCAT or other tests. 48
- I had a say in the decision about whether I need to take the FCAT or a different test. 44



**FCAT**

**% Yes**

- I took the FCAT this year. 77
- Teachers help ESE students prepare for the FCAT. 71
- In my English/reading classes, we work on the kinds of skills that are tested on the reading part of the FCAT. 69
- In my math classes, we work on the kinds of problems that are tested on the math part of the FCAT. 66
- I received accommodations (special testing conditions) for the FCAT. 44

**Hardee County School District  
2004 Teacher Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of the service providers of students with disabilities in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a teacher survey in conjunction with the Bureau's district monitoring activities.

Surveys developed for teachers and other service providers were mailed to each school, with a memo explaining the key data indicator and the monitoring process. All teachers, both general education and ESE, were provided an opportunity to respond. We received 196 teacher surveys representing approximately 54% of ESE and GE teachers in the district. Data are from six (75%) of the district's eight schools

**% Always,  
Almost Always,  
Frequently combined**

**To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school:**

- places students with disabilities into general education classes whenever possible. 96
- modifies and adapts curriculum for students as needed. 92
- addresses each student's individual needs. 92
- ensures that students with disabilities feel comfortable when taking classes with general education students. 91
- ensures that the general education curriculum is taught in ESE classes to the maximum extent possible. 85
- encourages collaboration among ESE teachers, GE teachers and service providers. 81
- provides adequate support to GE teachers who teach students with disabilities. 75
- offers teachers professional development opportunities regarding curriculum and support for students with disabilities. 67

**To help students with disabilities who take the FCAT, my school:**

- provides students with appropriate testing accommodations. 92
- aligns curriculum for students with the standards that are tested on the FCAT. 91
- provides teachers with FCAT test preparation materials. 90
- gives students in ESE classes updated textbooks. 81

**To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school:**

- develops IEPs according to student needs. 98
- allows students to make up credits lost due to disability-related absences. 94

*\*For teachers of students grade 8 and above*

**% Always,  
Almost Always,  
Frequently combined**

- conducts ongoing assessments of individual students' performance. 94
- makes an effort to involve parents in their child's education. 92
- ensures that classroom material is grade- and age-appropriate. 90
- encourages participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities. 86
- provides positive behavioral supports. 85
- ensures that classroom material is culturally appropriate. 85
- ensures that students are taught strategies to manage their behavior as needed. 84
- provides social skills training to students as needed. 81
- implements dropout prevention activities. 66

**The items below relate primarily to middle and high school students.  
If any items did not apply, respondents marked N/A.**

**% Always,  
Almost Always,  
Frequently combined**

**To encourage students with disabilities to stay in school, my school:**

- implements an IEP transition plan for each student. 95
- provides students with information about options after graduation. 85
- teaches transition skills for future employment and independent living. 72
- provides students with job training. 67
- coordinates on-the-job training with outside agencies. 60

**To ensure that as many students with disabilities as possible graduate with a standard diploma, my school:**

**% Always,  
Almost Always,  
Frequently combined**

- encourages students to aim for a standard diploma when appropriate. 95
- provides extra help to students who need to retake the FCAT. 93
- informs students through the IEP process of the different diploma options and their requirements. 90

*\*For teachers of students grade 8 and above*



**APPENDIX D:**  
**FORMS REVIEW**



**Hardee County School District  
Focused Monitoring Report  
Forms Review**

This forms review was completed as a component of the focused monitoring visit conducted the week of March 15, 2004. The following district forms were compared to the requirements of applicable State Board of Education rules, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and applicable sections of Part 300, Code of Federal Regulations. The review includes required revisions and recommended revisions based on programmatic or procedural issues and concerns. The results of the review are detailed below and list the applicable sources used for the review. In addition to a review of the current forms in use in Hardee County, you have also requested that we review forms that you are proposing for use in the future. The review of those forms follows the review of your current forms.

**Parent Notification of Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting**  
*Form Notice of Conference Form HSB0407*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.345**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting**  
*Form Individual Education Plan*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.347**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation**  
*Form Informed Notice And Consent For Evaluation Form HSB0402*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation**  
*Form Informed Notice And Consent For Re-evaluation Form HSB0446*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Notice and Consent for Initial Placement**  
*Form Informed Notice of Eligibility And Consent For Educational Placement Form HSB0424*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

- A statement of where a copy of procedural safeguards may be found must be included.

**Notice of Change in Placement Form**

**Form *Informed Prior Notice Of Change Of Placement Form HSB0435***

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

- A statement of where a copy of procedural safeguards may be found must be included.

**Notice of Change in FAPE**

**Form *Informed Prior Notice Of Change Of FAPE Form HSB0435***

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

- A statement of where a copy of procedural safeguards may be found must be included.

**Informed Notice of Refusal**

**Form *Informed Notice of Refusal to Take a Specific Action***

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503**

- A statement of where a copy of procedural safeguards may be found must be included.

**Notice of Dismissal**

**Form *Informed Notice of Dismissal Form HSB-0425***

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Notice of Ineligibility**

**Form *Informed Notice of Ineligibility Form HSB0436***

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

- A statement of where a copy of procedural safeguards may be found must be included.

**Documentation of Staffing Form**

**Form *Staffing Committee Process Documentation Form HSB0434***

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.534, 300.503**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Confidentiality of Information**

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Part 99 Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503**



This form contains the basic components for compliance.

**Educational Plan**

**Form** *Gifted Program Educational Plan (EP) Form HSB0445*

This form contains the basic components for compliance.

It was noted that the district utilizes the procedural safeguards wording provided by the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.



**APPENDIX E:**  
**GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**



## Glossary of Acronyms

ACE	Alternative Curriculum Environment
ARC	Association for Retarded Citizens
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CCC	Computer Curriculum Corporation
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CST	Child Study Team
CPI	Crisis Prevention Intervention
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
DNE	Did Not Enter
DOE	Department of Education
EH	Emotionally Handicapped
EMH	Educable Mentally Handicapped
EP	Educational Plan (for gifted students)
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
FS	Florida Statutes
FUSE	Florida Uniting Students in Education
GE	General Education
GED	General Education Development
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act
IEP	Individual Educational Plan (for students with disabilities)
ISS	In-school Suspension
LEA	Local Educational Agency
MIS	Management Information System
OSS	Out-of-school Suspension
PBS	Positive Behavioral Supports
PCA	Pioneer Career Academy
PIA	Positive Intervention Academy
PreK (PK)	Pre-kindergarten
QDI	Quality Designs for Instruction
SARC	Student Attendance Review Committee
SED	Severely Emotionally Disturbed
SEDNET	The Multiagency Network for Students with Severe Emotional Disturbance
SFCC	South Florida Community College
SIP	System Improvement Plan
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
TMH	Trainable Mentally Handicapped