

Liberty County School District

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring  
Reporting Incidents of Restraint and Seclusion

April 10–11, 2013



Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

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BRIC website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/clerhome.asp>

Email: [BRIC@fldoe.org](mailto:BRIC@fldoe.org)

Telephone: 850-245-0477

Fax: 850-245-0987



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October 28, 2013

Anthony Anderson, Superintendent  
Liberty County School District  
12926 N.W. CR 12  
Bristol, FL 32321-0429

Dear Superintendent Anderson:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report: On-Site Monitoring Reporting Incidents of Restraint and Seclusion* for the Liberty County School District. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site monitoring visit to your district on April 10–11, 2013. Those information sources included student record reviews, interviews with district and school staff and classroom observations. The final report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' (bureau) website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

The Liberty County School District was selected for an on-site visit due to reported incidents of seclusion that were greater than 225 percent of the state rate and a disproportionately high number of restraint incidents as compared to other districts within the size-alike group. Ms. Gay Lewis, director of instruction and exceptional student education (ESE), and her staff were very helpful during the bureau's preparation for the visit and during the on-site visit. In addition, the program directors, educational staff, and other staff members at each of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities welcomed and assisted the monitoring team during the on-site visit. The bureau's on-site monitoring activities identified strengths related to special education services provided in the facilities, as well as concerns, recommendations and findings of noncompliance.

**MONICA VERRA-TIRADO, Ed.D., CHIEF**  
*Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services*

Superintendent Anderson  
October 28, 2013  
Page Two

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the DJJ facilities within Liberty County School District. If there are any questions regarding this final report, please contact Patricia Howell, program director, Monitoring and Compliance, at 850-245-0476 or via email at [Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org](mailto:Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,



Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Chief  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Enclosure

cc: Gay Lewis  
Cathy Bishop  
Liz Conn  
Jacqueline Roumou

**Liberty County School District**

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Reporting Incidents of Restraint and Seclusion  
April 10–11, 2013**

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



# Liberty County School District

## Final Report: On-Site Monitoring Reporting Incidents of Restraint and Seclusion April 10–11, 2013

### Table of Contents

Authority .....	1
Monitoring Process.....	1
Background Information .....	1
School Selection.....	3
On-Site Activities .....	3
<i>Monitoring Team</i> .....	3
<i>Data Collection</i> .....	3
<i>Review of Records</i> .....	3
Results .....	4
FBA and BIP Review for Technical Adequacy.....	4
Strengths .....	4
Concerns .....	6
Required Actions .....	7
Recommendations.....	7
Findings of Noncompliance .....	7
Corrective Action .....	9
Technical Assistance.....	10
Bureau and SEDNET Contacts .....	10
Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	11
Appendix .....	12





## **Liberty County School District**

### **Final Report: On-Site Monitoring Reporting Incidents of Restraint and Seclusion April 10–11, 2013**

#### **Authority**

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (bureau), in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation, is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all exceptional student education (ESE) laws and rules (sections 1001.03(8), 1003.571 and 1008.32, Florida Statutes [F.S.]). One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (s. 300.1(d) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]). The bureau is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA and the educational requirements of the state are implemented (34 CFR §300.149(a)(1) and (2)).

In fulfilling this requirement, the bureau monitors ESE programs provided by district school boards in accordance with sections 1001.42, 1003.57 and 1003.573, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the bureau examines records and ESE services, evaluates procedures, provides information and assistance to school districts and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. The monitoring system is designed to facilitate improved educational outcomes for students while ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

#### **Monitoring Process**

##### **Background Information**

Section 1003.573, F.S., *Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities*, was created in July 2010 and established documentation, reporting and monitoring requirements for districts regarding the use of restraint and seclusion for students with disabilities. School districts were required to have policies and procedures that govern parent notification, incident reporting, data collection and monitoring the use of restraint or seclusion for students with disabilities in place no later than January 31, 2011. In July 2011, section 1003.573, F.S., was amended to require that the FDOE establish standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual or physical restraint and occurrences of seclusion. In September and October 2011, the standards established by the FDOE were provided to school districts and were included in the district's *Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures* (SP&P).

Manually unduplicated data for restraint and seclusion incidents by district for August 2011 through June 2012 indicated that Liberty County School District reported 45 incidents of restraint for four students and 36 incidents of seclusion for 15 students. With 283 students with disabilities reported as enrolled in the district during this time period, 1.41 percent of the students with disabilities were restrained and 5.30 percent were secluded.

In a letter dated January 11, 2013, the superintendent of Liberty County School District was informed that the Bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit due to reported incidents of seclusion that were greater than 225 percent of the state rate and a disproportionately high number of restraint incidents as compared to other districts within the size-alike group.

The 2012–13 first quarter data from the FDOE’s web-based reporting system for incidents of restraint and seclusion indicated a significant increase in restraint incidents reported (600 percent) and a decrease in seclusion incidents reported (25 percent) when compared to the first quarter data from the 2011–12 school year. In response to a questionnaire from the bureau requesting information about the increase in the number or restraint incidents and the actions planned by the district to meet its SP&P goals for reduction of the use of restraint, Liberty County School District responded as follows:

- There had been one very involved case that accounted for the significant increase in restraint incidents within the regular school environment. All other restraint incidents occurred in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities.
- The incidents of seclusion occurred exclusively in the DJJ facilities within the district. These facilities used class-wide behavior interventions as well as individual behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) for all students. There has been a focus on student de-escalation and the use of replacement skills. Educational and facility staff conduct ongoing case management to problem solve around individual students’ situations.
- The district has used a variety of resources, methods and strategies in an attempt to decrease the incidents of restraint. The following stakeholders were included in the problem solving process: the student’s medical home staff, school health coordinator, licensed clinical social worker, family service worker, behavioral specialist, teacher, administration, school health aide, interpreter and parents.
- Resources used by the district to reduce the number of incidents of restraint included:
  - The addition of a paraprofessional assigned to provide one-on-one support for a student who had required multiple restraints
  - Professional development that included additional crisis intervention methods
  - Consultation with the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, the regional local assistive technology specialist, primary care physician and Children’s Medical Services
  - Behavior case management with a board-certified behavior analyst as a primary intervention for reducing the number of restraint incidents

## **School Selection**

Upon review of the district's data reported via the FDOE's web-based reporting system for incidents of restraint and seclusion, it was determined that the on-site monitoring visit would be conducted at the following DJJ facilities: Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp and Bristol Youth Academy.

## **On-Site Activities**

### ***Monitoring Team***

The following bureau and Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET) staff members conducted the on-site monitoring visit:

- Jacqueline Roumou, Compliance Specialist (Team Leader)
- Susan Bentley, Program Specialist, Emotional Behavioral Disabilities
- Liz Conn, Compliance Specialist
- Jana Hill, SEDNET Region 2B Project Manager
- Kala Dean, SEDNET Project Manager

### ***Data Collection***

Monitoring activities included the following:

- Case studies – 9 students
- Classroom observations – 4 classrooms
- District administrator interviews – 4 participants
- Facility administrator interviews – 8 participants
- Teacher interviews – 4 participants

### ***Review of Records***

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

- Current and previous individual educational plans (IEPs)
- Functional behavioral assessments (FBAs)
- BIP
- Students Need Accurate Knowledge Enforcers (S.N.A.K.E.) behavior intervention point sheet(s)
- Discipline record
- Attendance record
- Report cards
- Student schedule
- Parent notices and other documentation related to restraint and seclusion
- Verification of training for staff members involved in incidents of restraint or seclusion

## Results

### FBA and BIP Review for Technical Adequacy

Five FBAs and BIPs from the nine case study students were submitted to the Florida Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Project for the purpose of evaluating technical adequacy. The FBAs and BIPs were evaluated using the *FBA/BIP Technical Adequacy Evaluation*. \* This is based on the essential components identified in the research literature that comprise a technically adequate FBA and BIP. This evaluation instrument has been reviewed by three national experts who provided input that led to this version.

The FBAs included more components associated with technical adequacy than did the BIPs. Although the FBAs were a relative strength, the mean score of the FBA subscale was 30 percent (standard deviation of the mean (*SD*) = 0.03). The average BIP percentage score was 22 percent (*SD* = 0.06). The *Liberty County Schools FBA/BIP Technical Adequacy Report* is included in the Appendix.

The following results reflect the data collected through the activities of the on-site monitoring as well as commendations, concerns, recommendations, findings of noncompliance and corrective action.

### Strengths

Specific strengths noted in the two DJJ facilities include the following:

- Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp
  - Student-to-teacher ratios were very low.
  - A *Safety Plan* was developed for each student based on documentation received and an interview with the student upon their arrival at the facility. This plan summarized the student's history—triggers, warning signs and successful calming strategies—and was shared with all staff members.
  - There was an emphasis on *Trauma Informed Care*. Staff were knowledgeable about mental health issues and took individual students' trauma history into account when making decisions regarding restraint and seclusion.
  - The nurse was a required observer for all incidents of restraint and had the authority to terminate a restraint if deemed that the student was not safe.
  - The facility promoted a restraint-free initiative that was communicated via posters throughout the facility along with incentives for students and staff once their goal has been met. After every restraint, staff members involved in the restraint had to complete a debriefing form and consider whether other options could have been attempted instead of the restraint. Reportedly, this initiative has reduced the number of restraints in recent years.

\*Iovannone, R., Christiansen, K., & Kincaid, D. (2010). *FBA/BIP technical adequacy evaluation*. Manuscript in preparation.

- The use of restraint and seclusion was monitored via the video surveillance system in an effort to ensure that what was documented within the incident report completed by staff members accurately reflected what happened. If it was observed that a staff member did not follow appropriate procedures during the restraint, the staff member was retrained or other administrative procedures were implemented.
  - Three DJJ administrators were required to independently review and document all incidents of restraint and seclusion.
  - Staff members involved in restraints had the opportunity to debrief with the psychologist after a restraint incident.
  - A psychologist was on site Monday through Friday.
  - A psychiatrist was on site on Sundays.
  - A check-list regarding the condition of a seclusion room was completed after each time a student had been secluded by the staff member.
- Bristol Youth Academy:
    - Varieties of incentives were outlined for students to earn privileges, celebrations and off-site trips. It was reported that students can accelerate their progress to the next level through positive behavior.
    - Youth Council Meetings had been initiated, where students could nominate the teacher of the month. Their comments about teachers were posted in the hall. The comments observed during the visit indicated that the students felt understood by their teachers.
    - The level system included academic grades in the criteria.
    - Treatment teams included teachers, students, and parents.
    - A part-time exceptional student education teacher had been contracted to provide support within the classroom and participated in treatment plan meetings for each student.
    - Students were placed in school according to their academic needs. When a student's challenging behaviors started to increase, the treatment team reviewed the student's academic data in terms of appropriate scaffolding or appropriate placement.
    - Vocational program training leads to industry-level certification in plumbing, electrical construction and carpentry.
    - Students participated in the General Educational Development (GED) classes which were offered, and many have earned their GED diplomas while in the facility.
    - Documentation and staff reporting indicated that a majority of the students' parents are actively engaged in the treatment process.

## Concerns

Districtwide concerns include the following:

- Concerns related to the technical adequacy of the FBAs and BIPs that were reviewed were noted earlier in this report in “FBA and BIP Review for Technical Adequacy,” with more specific information included in the Appendix.
- The district did not appear to have a process by which they communicated policies and procedures related to restraint and seclusion to the DJJ program administrators and lead teachers. In addition, it did not appear that there was discussion initiated by the district surrounding the data specific to each facility or problem solving with each facility in an effort to ensure that the district met the goals of the SP&P document for reduction of the use of restraint and seclusion.
- The reference to injuries on the same-day written notification form related only to incidents of restraint. The incident report on the FDOE web-based reporting system references injuries related to seclusion as well as restraint. The district noted that FDOE’s standard regarding same-day written notification does not reference seclusion in the requirement and only references “any injuries occurring during or resulting from the restraint.”
- There appeared to be no systematic process in place to track the required documentation for restraint and seclusion.
- The district form 49 (same-day written notification) did not include a signature and date line for the parent.
- During the facility administrator interviews, it became apparent that their understanding of what was considered to be a restraint during transport was different from the definition provided by FDOE.

Concerns were noted in the various facilities as follows:

- Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp
  - The same-day phone call to the parents was not documented on the required district forms, only on the nurse’s form. All applicable information related to an incident needed to be transferred from the nurse’s form to the required district forms.
  - There was no process to ensure that a minimum of two attempts were made to obtain acknowledgement of the same-day written notification when parents did not respond.
  - The treatment plan goals for the students were not updated on a regular basis.
- Bristol Youth Academy
  - Teachers were not familiar with Protective Action Response (PAR) de-escalation techniques.
  - There was no process to ensure that a minimum of two attempts were made to obtain acknowledgement of the same-day written notification when parents did not respond.

## Required Actions

The following actions apply districtwide and are required to be completed no later than January 21, 2014, with verifying documentation to be provided to the bureau no later than January 31, 2014.

- Provide training for developers of FBAs and BIPs to address the district's specific areas of deficit (noted in *Liberty County Schools FBA/BIP Technical Adequacy Report*, located in the Appendix). Establish a peer-review process for FBAs and BIPs for students who are restrained or secluded to make certain that FBAs and BIPs are of high quality, were implemented with fidelity and were producing the necessary results.
- Ensure that the DJJ facilities receive the most current information related to restraint and seclusion.
- Ensure that training related to the transport requirements is provided for staff members at DJJ facilities.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations apply districtwide:

- Revise the district's same-day written notification form to include a reference to injuries related to an incident of seclusion.
- Create a tracking form for use by the schools to document required notifications related to restraint and seclusion.
- Amend district form 49 (same-day written notification) to include a signature and date line for the parent.

Recommendations for the various schools include the following:

- Apalachicola Youth Forest Camp
  - Ensure that all applicable information related to restraint or seclusion is transferred from the nurse's form to the required district forms.
  - Implement the recommended district tracking form for documenting required notifications related to restraint and seclusion.
  - Review and update treatment plan goals on a regular basis, and implement a process for documenting the review of the treatment plan.
- Bristol Youth Academy
  - Provide additional training for teachers related to PAR de-escalation strategies.
  - Implement the recommended district tracking form for documenting required notifications related to restraint and seclusion.

## Findings of Noncompliance

Bureau staff members identified 25 incidents of noncompliance on a total of six standards in six of the record reviews. Identifying information regarding the six students reflecting the findings of noncompliance was provided to the Liberty County School District prior to the dissemination of this report.

Standard/Identified Noncompliance	Supporting Data
<p>1. The parent or guardian was provided with a notification in writing of any incident of restraint or seclusion. The notification included the type of restraint used and any injuries occurring during or resulting from the incident. (Section 1003.573(1)(c), F.S.)</p> <p>Notification in writing of any incident of restraint or seclusion was provided to the parent or guardian before the end of the school day on which the restraint or seclusion occurred. (Section 1003.573(1)(c), F.S.)</p>	<p>For one of the case study students reviewed at Bristol Youth Academy, there was no evidence that same-day written notification had been provided. For two of the case study students reviewed at Bristol Youth Academy (two incidents for one of the students and one incident for the other student) and one of the case study students reviewed at Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp, the same-day written notifications had not been provided before the end of the school day on which the incident occurred. For one of the case study students reviewed at Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp, the same day written notification did not specify whether there were injuries. For one of the case study students reviewed at Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp, the same-day written notification indicated no injuries; however, injuries were referenced in the telephone call documentation and the incident report.</p>
<p>2. Reasonable efforts were made to contact the parent or guardian via telephone or email on the day of the incident of restraint or seclusion. (Section 1003.573(1)(c), F.S.)</p>	<p>For three of the case study students reviewed at Bristol Youth Academy, there was no evidence that reasonable efforts were made to contact the parent or guardian on the day of the incident for the four incidents of restraints that were reviewed (two incidents for one student, and one incident for each of the two other students).</p>
<p>3. The school has documentation of the parent's or guardian's acknowledgement of the same-day notice or a minimum of two attempts to obtain written acknowledgement when the parent or guardian failed to respond to the initial notification. (Section 1003.573(1)(c), F.S.)</p>	<p>For three of the case study students reviewed at Bristol Youth Academy, there was no documentation of the parent's or guardian's acknowledgement of the same-day notice or the required attempts to obtain this acknowledgement when the parent or guardian failed to respond to the initial notification (two incidents for one student and one each for the other two students).</p>
<p>4. The parent or guardian was provided with a completed written report by mail within three school days of any incident of restraint or seclusion. (Section 1003.573(1)(d), F.S.)</p>	<p>For three of the case study students reviewed at Bristol Youth Academy (two incidents for one student and one incident each for other two students) and one of the case study students reviewed at Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp, there was</p>



Standard/Identified Noncompliance	Supporting Data
	no documentation that the incident report had been mailed to the parent within the required timeline.
5. The school has documentation of the parent's or guardian's signed acknowledgement of receipt of the incident report or a minimum of two attempts to obtain written acknowledgement when the parent or guardian failed to respond to the incident report. (Section 1003.573(1)(d), F.S.)	For three of the case study students reviewed at Bristol Youth Academy (two incidents for one student and one incident each for the other two students), there was no documentation of the parent's or guardian's acknowledgement of receipt of the incident report or the required attempts to obtain this acknowledgement.

### Corrective Action

In a June 21, 2013, letter to the Liberty County School District providing student-specific information, the bureau required that **no later than August 21, 2013**, the district was to identify the policy, procedure or practice that caused the noncompliance and provide evidence of the action taken to ensure future compliance. A PowerPoint presentation related to restraint and seclusion specific to each DJJ facility was developed by the district. This presentation was used on August 8, 2013, to provide training to Bristol Youth Academy staff members regarding the requirements for reporting restraints. In addition, the district provided training on the same day to Liberty County teachers assigned to Bristol Youth Academy regarding the use of *Positive Behavior Support* and *Crisis Prevention Intervention*. On August 12, 2013, the district provided training to Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp staff regarding practices and procedures related to restraint and seclusion. It is recommended that this presentation be included in new staff training at each facility.

In addition, **no later than one year from the date of the letter (June 21, 2014)**, the district must demonstrate correct implementation of the standards identified as noncompliant during the on-site visit. A sampling process is described on pages nine and ten of the *Exceptional Student Education Compliance Manual* accessible at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/m-compli.pdf>.

## Technical Assistance

1. *Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders* (Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project) may be accessed at [http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/RTIB%20Guide%20101811\\_final.pdf](http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/RTIB%20Guide%20101811_final.pdf) and provides an overview of the critical components of a multi-tiered system of support for behavior. These critical components point to systems changes that are necessary for a results-driven ESE system.
2. The *FBA/BIP Technical Adequacy Evaluation* (Iovannone, Christiansen, & Kincaid, 2010) has been provided to Florida school districts via email on April 11, 2013, and may be used in the development of FBAs and BIPs to ensure the inclusion of the essential components for technical adequacy.
3. Information regarding the establishment of school-based mental health services and training related to trauma-informed care may be accessed by contacting the Region 2B – Liberty office of SEDNET at 850-643-2275, extension 235.
4. The district's SP&P provides district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual, physical or mechanical restraint and seclusion developed by the FDOE.
5. In addition, the technical assistance paper entitled *Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Restraint and Seclusion with Students with Disabilities*, dated October 14, 2011, offers specific information for guidance regarding restraint and seclusion.

## Bureau and SEDNET Contacts

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

***Dispute Resolution and Monitoring***  
850-245-0476

Vicki Eddy, Compliance Specialist  
[Vicki.Eddy@fldoe.org](mailto:Vicki.Eddy@fldoe.org)

Patricia Howell, Program Director  
Monitoring and Compliance  
[Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org](mailto:Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org)

Jacqueline Roumou, Compliance Specialist  
[Jacqueline.Roumou@fldoe.org](mailto:Jacqueline.Roumou@fldoe.org)

Amelia Bowman, Compliance Specialist  
[Amelia.Bowman@fldoe.org](mailto:Amelia.Bowman@fldoe.org)

Jill Snelson, Compliance Specialist  
[Jill.Snelson@fldoe.org](mailto:Jill.Snelson@fldoe.org)

Misty Bradley, Compliance Specialist  
[Misty.Bradley@fldoe.org](mailto:Misty.Bradley@fldoe.org)

***Bureau Resource and  
Information Center***  
850-245-0477

Liz Conn, Compliance Specialist  
[Liz.Conn@fldoe.org](mailto:Liz.Conn@fldoe.org)

[BRIC@fldoe.org](mailto:BRIC@fldoe.org)

Karlene Deware, Compliance Specialist  
[Karlene.Deware@fldoe.org](mailto:Karlene.Deware@fldoe.org)

***SEDNET***  
850-643-1029, extension 206  
Teresa Yancey, Project Manager  
Region 2B – Liberty  
[Teresa.Yancey@lcsbonline.org](mailto:Teresa.Yancey@lcsbonline.org)

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

**Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

BIP	Behavioral intervention plan
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
ESE	Exceptional student education
FBA	Functional behavioral assessment
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
F.S.	Florida Statutes
GED	General Educational Development
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
PAR	Protective Action Response
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
<i>SD</i>	Standard deviation of the mean
SEDNET	Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities
S.N.A.K.E.	Students Need Accurate Knowledge Enforcers
SP&P	Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures

## **Appendix**

### **FBA/BIP Technical Adequacy Report**

## Liberty County Schools FBA/BIP Technical Adequacy Report

Five completed functional behavior assessments (FBA) and behavior intervention plans (BIP) from Liberty County Schools were submitted by the Florida Department of Education to the University of South Florida (USF) Interdisciplinary Center for Evaluation and Intervention, a Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) multi-disciplinary specialized clinic, for the purpose of evaluating their inclusion of FBA/BIP components for technical adequacy. The products were evaluated using the *FBA/BIP Technical Adequacy Evaluation*\* (Iovannone, Christiansen, & Kincaid, 2010). The evaluation tool includes the essential components identified in the research literature that comprise a technically adequate FBA/BIP.

The evaluation tool includes a total of 18 items, nine related to the required FBA components and nine related to the required BIP components. Individual item scores range from 0–2, with a 0 indicating that the component is absent, a 1 indicating that the component is partially present and a 2 indicating that the component is present and complete. The maximum raw score for each subscale component section is 18 with a maximum total scale raw score of 36. Subscale scores for the two sections (FBA and BIP) represent the percentage of the total achieved by the product for each individual FBA/BIP case. The total score indicates the total percentage of both the FBA and BIP scales.

Two scorers evaluated the five FBA/BIPs submitted. One scorer is a doctoral-level board-certified behavior analyst who has a faculty position; the other is a graduate student in the applied behavioral analysis (ABA) program who is a former elementary school teacher. Both individuals are supervised by USF faculty members who are board-certified behavior analysts. Each individual scorer evaluated the products independently and then compared scores for inter-rater agreement. Disagreements were discussed and consensus was reached for each component score. Inter-rater agreement scores for the Liberty FBA/BIPs ranged between 94% and 100%, with a mean of 97%.

The graphs on pages 21–23 illustrate the percentage scores of each product submitted for review. Each FBA/BIP was given a numerical code by the Florida Department of Education, and these were used as the identifiers. The table on page 24 summarizes the mean scores of the five products by showing the mean raw score achieved for each of the 18 items and the mean FBA and BIP subscale percentage scores as well as the mean total percentage score. An examination of the graphs indicates that the FBAs showed higher technical adequacy than the BIPs. The average FBA percentage score across the five products was 30% ( $SD = .03$ ), while the average BIP percentage score of the group was 22% ( $SD = .06$ ).

In evaluating the FBA/BIP technical adequacy outcomes, it does need to be noted that the five FBAs/BIPs chosen by the Florida Department of Education for this evaluation were selected specifically due to their association with students who had been

\*Iovannone, R., Christiansen, K., & Kincaid, D. (2010). FBA/BIP technical adequacy evaluation. *Manuscript in preparation.*

restrained or secluded. Thus, these five FBAs/BIPs are not reflective of all the FBAs/BIPs conducted by Liberty County.

A summary of the five FBAs/BIPs' performance on each item is described below.

### *Functional Behavior Assessment Domain*

- FBA Item 1—Multiple sources used for FBA. The literature states that high-quality FBAs include information from all relevant persons who know the student well. For example, literature suggests that a minimum of three data sources should be used or triangulated in developing a hypothesis for the target behaviors. An example would be to review the FBA data from a teacher interview (source 1), a direct observation (source 2) and an interview with the student (source 3). By having multiple sources of data, the accuracy of the hypothesis is increased.

All of the FBAs submitted by Liberty County listed identical data collection methods used to gather information on the Functional Behavior Assessment reports. The list included all indirect methods, such as S.N.A.K.E. point cards and incident reports, as well as on a specific FBA tool titled Functional Behavior Rating Tool. In each FBA report, the same general description of who completed the FBA Rating Tool was provided: "completed by teachers and others as appropriate." No further details were provided on the data used to compile the FBA report, and it was unclear who comprised the FBA team.

- FBA Item 2—Identifying and operationalizing the target behavior(s). Identifying the behavior(s) that will be the focus of the FBA as well as clearly defining the behaviors so that it is measurable and observable allows for more accurate information on the conditions under which the behavior occurs and the consequences maintaining the behavior. In addition, a complete description allows for more accurate recording of progress monitoring data, both baseline and post-intervention.

All of the FBAs submitted identified several problem behaviors. None provided operational definitions that were measurable and observable for the behaviors identified. It was noted that many FBAs/BIPs submitted had inconsistent problem behaviors listed throughout the document. For example, FBA 1a identified several behaviors as problems on page 1 within the section that requested a definition of the problem behavior. The hypothesis on page 2, however, identified three behaviors, two behaviors that were included in the list on page 1 (i.e., arguing, cursing) and one additional behavior that was not identified or defined previously (i.e., disrespect). The Target behavior changed again on the third page of the document, titled "Positive Behavior Intervention Plan," to Physical Aggression. The inconsistency in behavior targets occurred in several of the FBA/BIP documents submitted, making it difficult to determine the behavior that was the focus of the FBA and the behavior intervention plan.

- FBA Item 3—Baseline data collected on the problem behavior. Knowing the performance of problem behavior prior to intervening is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the BIP and monitor the student’s response to intervention. In addition, baseline data provide information to the team on the intensity, durability and frequency of the behavior problem.

None of the FBAs submitted descriptive baseline data, and at times the baseline data were provided for behaviors that were not the focus of the FBA. A couple of products vaguely described average occurrence of behaviors within the section requesting definition of the problem behavior. For instance, FBA 1e stated “He uses excessive profanity in the majority of his classes daily.” Additional details were not provided, including the timeline over which the data were collected, who collected the data and the method used to analyze the behavior. This was the theme observed in most of the documents submitted.

- FBA Item 4—Setting events. Setting events (distal conditions and/or environmental conditions that, when in existence, result in a higher likelihood of problem behavior occurring after presentation of an immediate antecedent), when present, are important to understand the student’s problem behavior and to develop effective interventions. Establishing a pattern of behavior that occurs when setting events are present allows the team to develop interventions that can modify the immediate antecedents so that problem behavior is effectively prevented.

None of the FBAs submitted indicated that setting events were discussed or considered.

- FBA Item 5—Antecedents predicting problem behavior. Events present in the environment prior to performance of problem behavior is vital for developing a comprehensive behavior intervention plan. Through identification of a pattern of events that predict occurrences of target behavior(s), interventions can be developed to modify the antecedent events so that problem behavior will be prevented. Antecedent events are observable actions that can be observed in the environment prior to problem behavior occurring.

Four of the five products provided information on antecedent events that evoked problem behavior, However, the information was not routinely found in the FBA section; rather, it was found on the third page of the documents titled “Positive Behavior Intervention Plan.” One FBA (1e) stated that the antecedent to the target behavior was “unclear.” The FBAs that did identify antecedent events lacked the detail necessary to determine the nature of the trigger and how it relates to the occurrence of problem behavior or provided antecedents that would not be considered contextual or observable actions. For example, FBA 1a identified “anger” as an antecedent event. It was unclear what was meant by

“anger” and how “anger” triggers behavior episodes. Furthermore, “anger” is not an observable antecedent event.

- FBA Item 6—Antecedents present in the absence of problem behavior. Knowing the antecedents that predict problem behavior occurrence is essential. However, it is equally important to know what contextual circumstances predict and trigger appropriate behavior or the absence of the problem behavior. By reviewing and comparing the environmental events that are present when problem behaviors as well as appropriate behaviors are occurring, the team can be more confident in their development of a hypothesis that will be more accurate and lead to more effective interventions.

None of the FBAs submitted addressed circumstances in which the students did not have problem behaviors.

None of the FBAs submitted identified conditions under which problem behavior was less likely to be observed.

- FBA Item 7—Consequences immediately following problem behavior. Consequences, or the responses others perform immediately after the occurrence of problem behavior, allow the team to determine the possible functions that are maintaining behaviors as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the behavior obtaining the “payoff.”

None of the FBAs submitted provided information on the responses that followed behavior problem events.

- FBA Item 8—Hypotheses components. An FBA-derived hypothesis drives behavior interventions and should include a summary statement that describes three components. Component 1 includes the antecedents or contextual events (i.e., setting events and immediate triggers) predicting the problem behavior, component 2 includes the behavior that was the focus of the FBA and component 3 suggests the function or purpose of the behavior that was determined by the consequences typically following the targeted problem behavior.

All of the FBAs included a hypothesis statement that included two components—the behavior and the function. None provided an antecedent or setting event. As noted in FBA Item 2, some of the hypotheses listed different behaviors than were identified previously as the problems. Due to the lack of information related to consequences that followed each student’s problem behavior, it was not possible to confirm whether the functions identified in the hypotheses were linked to the FBA data.

- FBA Item 9—Function is supported by the research literature and linked to FBA data. Functional behaviors are those that operate (i.e., get to or away from) on



the environment and result in a desired outcome or payoff. Functions of behavior, in keeping with ABA principles, are observable and measurable and provide information on how the student's behavior is related to the context in which it occurs. The function then drives intervention development that will increase appropriate replacement behaviors and decrease problem behaviors by altering environmental events (e.g., providing the same outcome that the problem behavior achieved to the appropriate replacement behavior).

Most of the FBAs included at least one function that was valid. It was not clear for some whether the function was linked to the FBA data, specifically in the FBAs that did not describe how others responded immediately after problem behavior was performed by the student. Several hypotheses included additional functions that were not valid or observable (e.g., control, social standing).

### *Behavior Intervention Plan Domain*

- BIP item 10—Dates of FBA and BIP are within 30 days. When behavior is interfering with academic performance, it is imperative that there is minimal delay in developing the BIP after the FBA is completed.

Four of the BIPs submitted had the same dates as the preceding functional behavior assessment document. One BIP (1c) had the same month and day but different years, with the BIP occurring in 2012 and the FBA occurring in 2013. It is possible that one of the years is a typographical error only; however, it was unable to be determined through any other information on the BIP or the FBA which date was the accurate date.

- BIP Item 11—The FBA hypothesis is referenced. The primary purpose of conducting the FBA is to build the BIP from the hypothesis. It should be clear that the intervention strategies described on the BIP are linked to the hypothesis.

None of the third pages of the documents that were titled "Positive Behavior Intervention Plan" included or referenced the hypothesis stated on the functional behavior assessment report. The two separate documents did not appear to be continuous; that is, the Positive Behavior Intervention Plan appeared as a different format, different font, and had a district identifier including a form number. The functional behavior assessment forms appeared to be a specific school form, due to the school's name included in the center of the header portion.

*\*General note about interventions. All of the FBAs/BIPs submitted included a section titled "Interventions" on the second page of the FBA. The intervention described, S.N.A.K.E. Behavioral Management System, was identical for each student with only the name of the student changed within the text. It was unclear how this intervention was linked to or modified by the functional behavior assessment. In addition, each FBA listed the S.N.A.K.E. point cards as data*

*collected as part of the FBA, indicating that the intervention has been implemented for the student. Yet none of the FBAs documented how they modified the S.N.A.K.E. intervention so that it would become effective at improving the student's behavior. Because this section was identical for each student and described in general terms, it was not considered in scoring items 12–15.*

- BIP Item 12—Prevention strategies are present, described completely and linked to FBA. The primary reason for developing multi-component hypotheses and behavior intervention plans is to make the problem behavior irrelevant, ineffective and inefficient. This can occur when interventions are described that modify the contextual events or antecedents so that these events are no longer “triggers” for problem behavior occurrence. By preventing problem behaviors from being performed, more opportunities are available to instruct students on use of replacement behaviors and to provide reinforcement for engaging in replacement skills.

None of the BIPs submitted included antecedent interventions. One (1c) described an intervention as offering “positive choices when possible to control his environment,” which could be a potential antecedent/prevention intervention, but no further details describing exactly how the intervention would be used as a prevention measure was provided and it was unclear whether this was intended to be a modifier of the antecedent identified as “when other campers are receiving more attention than he is and as a task avoidance behavior,” a replacement behavior or alternative skill or a response to behaviors.

- BIP Item 13—Inclusion of a replacement behavior strategy, described completely and linked to the FBA. Behavior is a skill to be taught, similar to academics. By identifying a replacement behavior that the team would prefer to see the student perform rather than the problem behavior, a plan can be developed to carefully describe how to teach the skill by modeling, providing guided practice and feedback and providing ample opportunities for the student to perform the skill and get reinforced. The replacement behavior can be either a communicative functional behavior (i.e., a behavior that directly communicates the function included in the hypothesis, such as asking for escape/break or asking for attention) or a physically incompatible behavior (i.e., a behavior that is pro-social or desired such as raising hand, being academically engaged with assignments, making positive comments, etc.). When selecting a replacement behavior, the team will give consideration to whether the behavior is one that can be performed as easily as the problem behavior and result in the same outcome.

All of the BIPs submitted identified “Alternative skills to be taught” on page 2 of the functional behavior assessment reports. The same content on page 2 was also included on the positive behavior intervention form within the section titled “Replacement Behavior.” Many of the replacement behaviors identified could be valid and desirable (e.g., coping strategies, anger management) but were

general in their description of how the student would be taught the behaviors. Within the section titled “Specific Interventions to Change Behavior,” all of the BIPs included phrases such as “verbal cues to return to appropriate behaviors”; however, the same phrase was repeated throughout each of the five student BIPs, and it was unclear exactly how it was individualized or informed by the FBA. For example, for students who are performing behaviors for the purpose of obtaining attention from others (which was the most often cited function of these FBAs), verbal cues may not be the most effective method of redirecting from problem to appropriate behaviors. Rather, the intervention would want to consider using prompts that required minimum attention so that students would only get attention by using their replacement behavior.

- BIP Item 14—Inclusion of a reinforcement of replacement behavior strategy, described completely and linked to the FBA. The notion of functional equivalence (i.e., the replacement behavior being taught must be reinforced with the same outcome that was achieved by the problem behavior) is important in making sure that the student will use the new, appropriate skill as a replacement for the old problem behavior.

None of the BIPs submitted specifically described how the function listed in the hypothesis would be obtained by the student performing the alternative/replacement behavior. All of the BIPs provided a statement such as “points and verbal praise when earned” as an intervention, with the verbal praise possibly being a functional equivalent to attention. However, they lacked detail on exactly how the student would get the verbal praise for performing specific behaviors or the nature of the verbal praise. In addition, on the positive behavioral intervention plan, each of the five submitted BIPs listed “individualized SNAKE (education behavior plan) incentives and verbal praise” within the “Student’s Reinforcers” section, but did not provide the information on how it was individualized and linked to the FBA data.

- BIP Item 15—Discontinue reinforcement of the problem behavior strategy. An effective behavior intervention plan addresses how others will respond to problem behavior in way that will no longer allow problem behavior to get the hypothesized function. Instead, the replacement behavior will be the primary way to effectively and efficiently get the outcome.

All of the BIPs had a section describing the plan for dealing with the student at the first sign of target behavior. Most of the BIPs included statements indicating that students would be redirected to the appropriate behaviors, but failed to describe in sufficient detail how the redirection would occur so that the student would no longer get the function identified in the hypothesis for displaying the problem behavior.

- BIP Item 16—Crisis plan (if applicable). If a problem behavior is intense, it is important for a crisis plan to be considered and included, if applicable. The

information from the FBA should help the team develop an individualized crisis plan that considers the student's hypothesized function as well as determines how best to prevent the behavior from reaching crisis plan levels and how to deescalate the behavior so that stability is achieved more quickly and effectively. The crisis plan should include operational definitions of behavior(s) that would be considered at a crisis level and would initiate the crisis plan implementation. Finally, the crisis plan should carefully consider how to avoid becoming the primary mechanism for the student to achieve the payoff for behavior. For example, if the hypothesized behavior is escape from academic demands and the crisis plan includes extensive time-out procedures, the student will have obtained the functional reinforcement by engaging in intensive levels of problem behaviors.

None of the FBAs/BIPs included information that indicated consideration of the need for a crisis plan nor described a crisis plan.

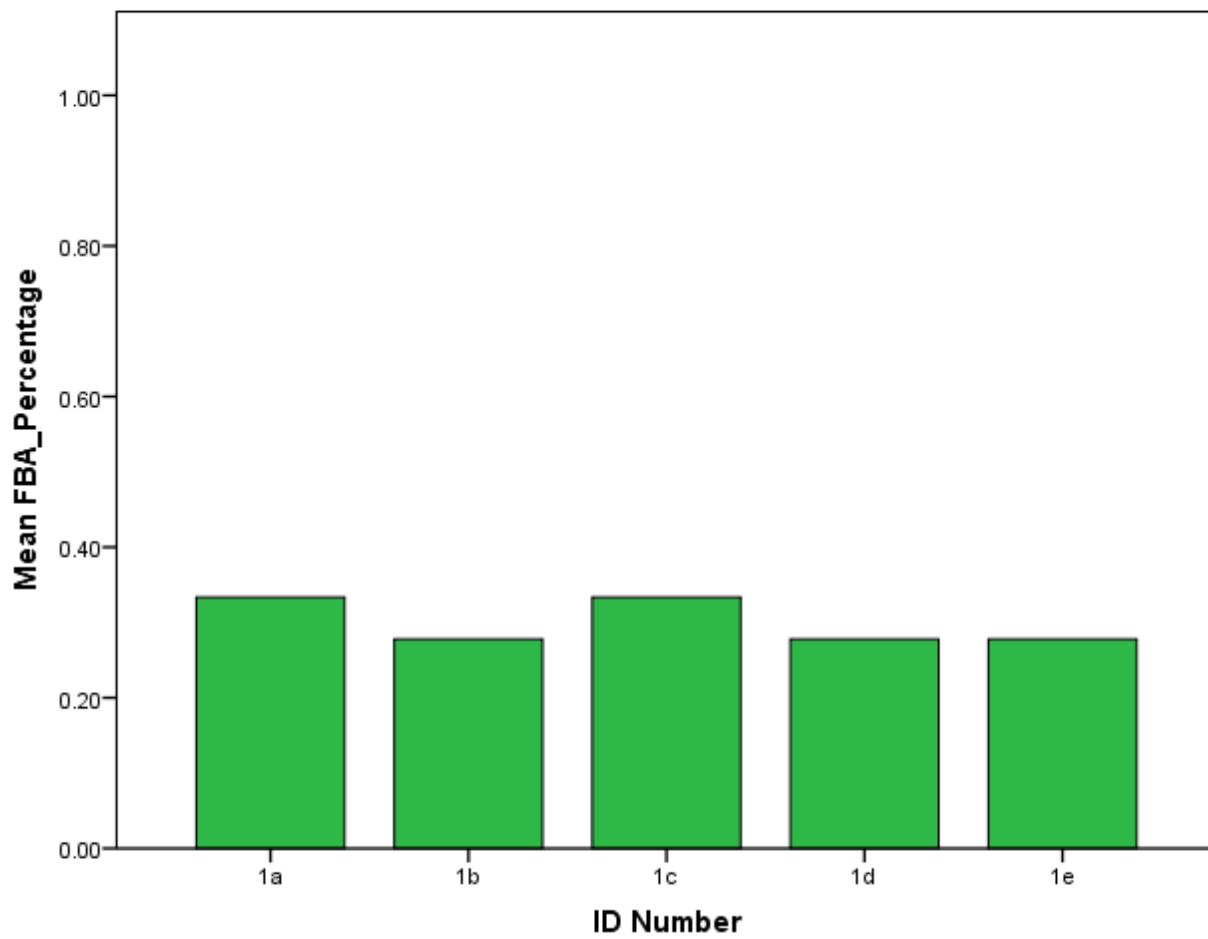
- BIP Item 17—Inclusion of plan for post-intervention data. Once a behavior plan is developed, it needs to be consistently monitored and reviewed. At a minimum, the team should determine the data they will collect to determine the plan's effectiveness. This includes student outcome data as well as fidelity data. This specific item evaluates whether the FBA/BIP provides a specific method for determining the data to be collected as well as the date for review.

None of the BIPs provided a progress monitoring or follow-up plan for data to be used in making decisions about effectiveness of interventions.

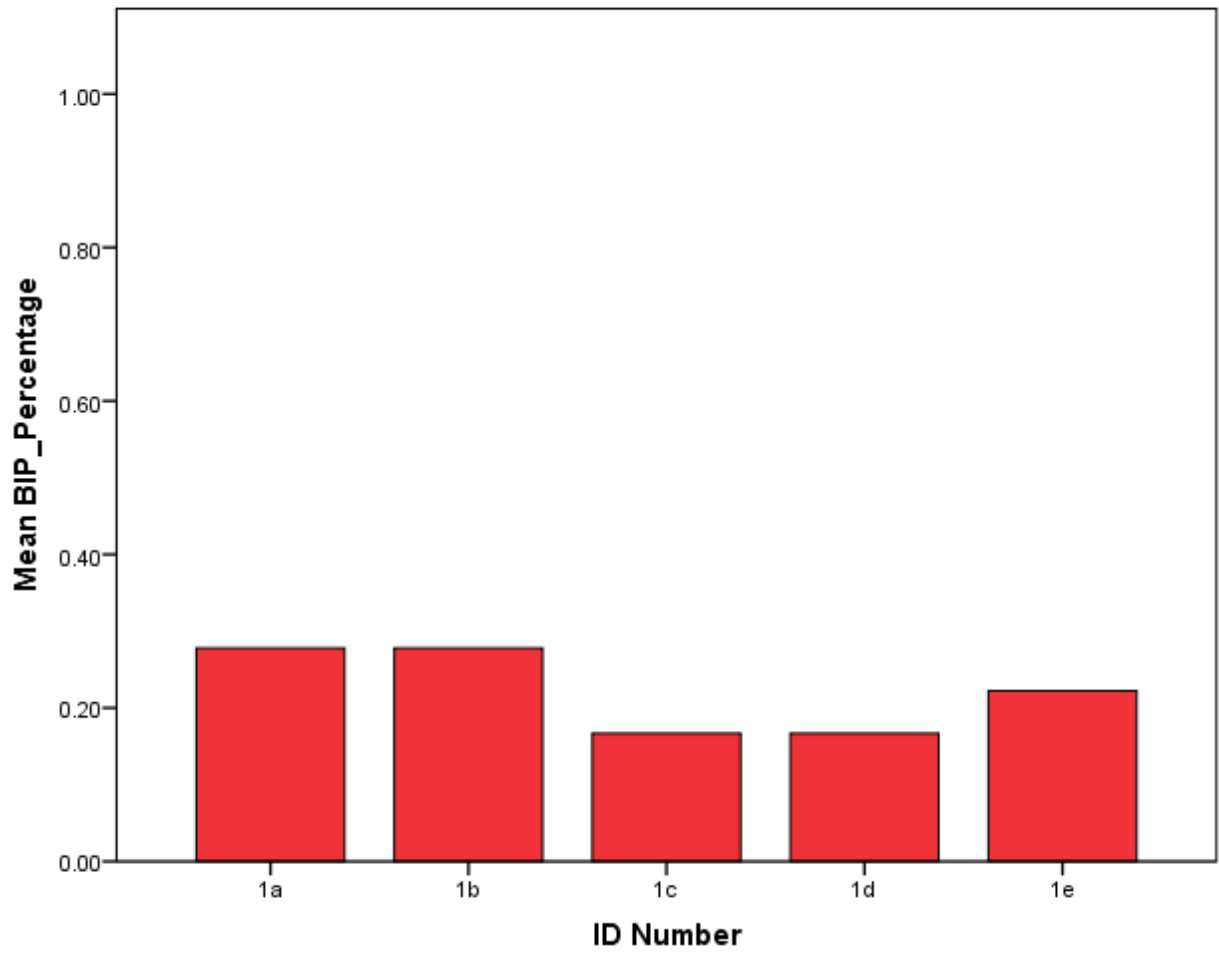
- BIP Item 18—Inclusion of a plan for collecting fidelity of implementation. When making data-based decisions on a student's response to intervention, it is imperative that the team knows whether the plan was implemented as intended.

None of the BIPs provided any plan related to how it would be determined that the plan was implemented with fidelity.

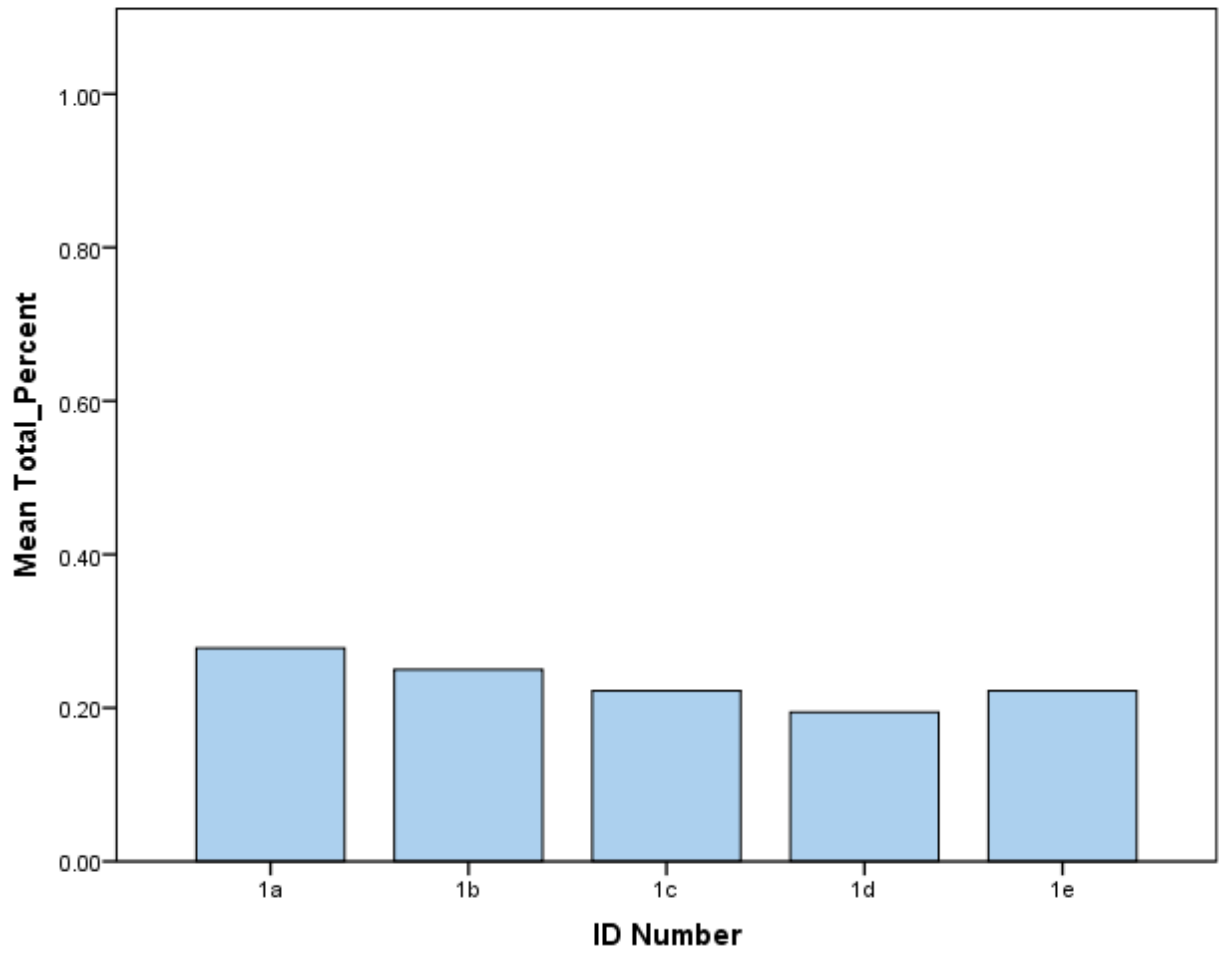
**Functional Behavior Assessment Domain-Technical Adequacy Percentage by Case #**



**Behavior Intervention Plan Domain-Technical Adequacy Percentage by Case #**



**Total FBA/BIP Technical Adequacy Percentage Scores by Case #**



**Table 1: Mean Raw Scores of Technical Adequacy Items**

Item	Mean Raw Score (max = 2.0)	Standard Deviation
FBA (N = 5)		
Item 1–Sources of FBA	1.00	.00
Item 2–Operational Definition	1.00	.00
Item 3–Baseline Data	.80	.45
Item 4–Setting Events	.00	.00
Item 5–Antecedents/problem behavior	.80	.45
Item 6–Antecedents/appropriate behavior	.00	.00
Item 7–Consequences	.00	.00
Item 8–Hypothesis components	1.00	.00
Item 9–Function is observable and measurable	.80	.45
BIP (N = 5)		
Item 1–Timeline between FBA/BIP	1.60	.89
Item 2–FBA hypothesis referenced	.00	.00
Item 3–Prevention strategy/link	.00	.00
Item 4–Replacement behavior strategy/link	1.00	.00
Item 5–Reinforce new behavior strategy/link	.80	.45
Item 6–Discontinue reinforcing problem behavior	.60	.55
Item 7–Crisis plan need considered	.00	.00
Item 8–Monitoring/evaluating data plan	.00	.00
Item 9–Fidelity/support plan	.00	.00
Total Scales	Mean Percentage	Standard Deviation
FBA domain	30%	.03
BIP domain	22%	.06
Total domain	23%	.03





**Florida Department of Education**  
*Pam Stewart, Commissioner*

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