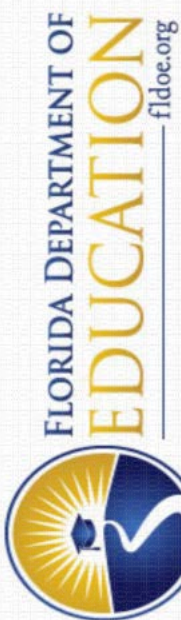


**2014-15 Exceptional Student Education  
Monitoring and Assistance  
On-Site Visit Report**

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**Manatee County School District  
May 18-20, 2015**



This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES), Division of Public Schools, Florida Department of Education, and is available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/e/mon-home.asp>. For information on available resources, contact the BEES Resource and Information Center (BRIC).

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October 9, 2015

Dr. Diana Greene, Superintendent  
Manatee County School District  
215 Manatee Ave. W.  
Bradenton, Florida 34205-9069

Dear Superintendent Greene:

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) is pleased to provide you with the 2014-15 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Manatee County School District. The 2014-15 monitoring process focused on reviewing progress for the action plan developed during the 2013-14 on-site visit as well as newly identified targeted areas. BEESS is committed to providing intensive supports for districts selected during the 2013-14 school year for three years of progress monitoring, of which your district was one.

The Manatee County School District was selected as needing continued intensive supports due to coordinated early intervening services related to over-identification. In addition, new areas of concern were noted: graduation rates and incidents of seclusion. The on-site visit was conducted by a State Support Team (SST) that included BEESS staff, department staff and discretionary project staff.

Multiple sources of information were integrated to develop this report including analyzing recent data and evaluating the effectiveness of the district's action plan. In addition, if determined necessary, district and school personnel were interviewed, along with classroom walk-through visits and conducting student focus groups. This process focuses on a shift from ESE compliance to outcomes to prepare all students for college and career readiness, which includes: increasing standard diploma graduates; decreasing the number of students dropping out of school; increasing regular class placement; decreasing the need for seclusion and restraint; and eliminating disproportionality in eligibility identification and discipline.

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

Superintendent Greene  
October 9, 2015  
Page Two

Ms. Wylene Herring-Cayasso, Director of ESE, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for the on-site visit and throughout the visit. In addition, school-level personnel welcomed SST members and demonstrated a continued commitment to the education of students in the school district. This report will be posted on the BEESS website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Manatee County School District. If there are any questions regarding this report, please contact me at 850-245-0475 or via email at [monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org](mailto:monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,

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

Enclosure

cc: Wylene Herring-Cayasso  
Patricia Howell  
Cathy Howard-Williams

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**2014-15 Exceptional Student Education  
Monitoring and Assistance  
On-Site Visit Report**

**Manatee County School District**

**May 18-20, 2015**

**Authority**

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), 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 (sections 1001.03(3), 1003.571 and 1008.32, Florida Statutes [F.S.]) and rules. 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 ss.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.

Under 34 CFR §300.646(b)(2), if a state identifies significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity in a Local Educational Agency (LEA) with respect to the identification of children as children with disabilities, the identification of children in specific disability categories, the placement of children with disabilities in particular educational settings or the taking of disciplinary actions, the LEA must use the maximum amount (15 percent) of funds allowable for comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) for children in the LEA who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic or behavioral supports in order to succeed in a general education environment. These children should include particularly, but not exclusively, children in those groups that were significantly over-identified.

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 of the use of restraint or seclusion for students with disabilities in place no later than January 31, 2011. In July 2011, s. 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) document.

## ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process

### Background Information

The 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those State Performance Plan indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for CEIS and the following indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities:

- Indicator 1 – Graduation: Percentage of youth with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma.
- Indicator 2 – Dropout: Percentage of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.
- Indicator 4 – Rates of suspension and expulsion:
  - A. Percentage of districts that have a significant discrepancy in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs.
  - B. Percentage of districts that have (a) a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days for children with IEPs; and (b) policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and procedural safeguards.
- Indicator 5 – Educational environments:  
Percentage of children with IEPs aged six through 21:
  - A. Inside the regular class 80 percent or more of the day;
  - B. Inside the regular class less than 40 percent of the day; and
  - C. In separate schools, residential facilities or homebound/hospital placements.
- Indicator 10 – Disproportionality, specific disability categories: Percentage of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.
- CEIS – Services provided to students in kindergarten through Grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through Grade 3) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment.
- Restraint – Rate of incidents of restraint, as reported on the FDOE website.
- Seclusion – Rate of incidents of seclusion, as reported on the FDOE website.

The ESE Monitoring and Assistance process includes four phases:

- Phase 1 was composed of planning activities that occurred in advance of the first on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 was the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST). This visit was conducted on **May 18-20, 2015**.
- Phase 3 includes follow-up and post-initial visit activities that are conducted by a designated follow-up team, as determined by the SST, and identification of the ongoing data that will be collected. **This report reflects a follow-up to the 2013-14 monitoring visit and identifies three new areas of concern: graduation, dropout and incidents of seclusion.**
- Phase 4 includes evaluation of the effectiveness of the school district's action plan, and should include participation of the comprehensive team that was involved in Phase 1.



In a letter dated March 18, 2015, the superintendent of the Manatee County School District was informed that the bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: graduation rates, incidents of seclusion and CEIS for over-identification of students with an Emotional Behavioral Disability (EBD). The district's dropout rate was also addressed during the on-site visit.

## **On-Site Activities**

### **On-Site Visit Team**

The following SST members planned or conducted the monitoring and assistance for the on-site visit:

#### **FDOE, BEESS**

- Monica Verra-Tirado, Chief, BEESS
- Cathy Howard-Williams, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
- Heidi Metcalf, Administrator, Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems (PAADS)
- Sean Freeman, Program Specialists, PAADS
- David Wheeler, School Psychologist, Student Support Services
- Diana McLendon, Program Specialist, Instructional Support Services

#### **FDOE, Bureau Discretionary Projects**

- Anna Winneker, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Positive Behavior Support: Multi-Tiered System of Supports (PBS:MTSS)
- Lisa Yount, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Florida's Problem Solving: Response to Intervention (PS:Rtl)
- Deborah Bay, Project Manager, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Denise Frenz, Facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) West
- Danielle Roberts-Dahm, Assistant Director, Project 10: Transition Education Network
- Karen Berkman, Executive Director, Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)
- Holly Derrick, Human Resource Development Consultant, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)
- Larry Ruble, Regional Facilitator, Differentiated Accountability

### **Data Collection**

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Review of recent data
- District and school-level administrator interviews
- Classroom walk-through visits
- Student focus groups
- Teacher focus groups
- Behavior Technician focus group
- District MTSS Team focus group (overview of CEIS calculation)
- Action-planning and problem-solving process

## Status Updates on the 2013-14 On-Site Visit

The following information is excerpted from the 2013-14 on-site monitoring report. Additional information has been added in bold to update the status of the recommendations and required actions.

<b>Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-Site Visit</b>	
Early intervening services Disproportionate Representation of Students with Disabilities	
Summary:	<p>Manatee County School District was required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA, Part B funds for early intervening services because the school district's data indicated the following: Black students were at least 3.5 times more likely to be identified as a student with emotional or behavioral disabilities when compared to all other races combined. According to the 2013 LEA Profile, the school district's risk ratio for black students identified with emotional or behavioral disabilities was 5.14.</p> <p>Black students were at least 3.19 times more likely to be identified as a student with intellectual disabilities as compared to the state rate of 2.20. (Source: 2013 LEA Profile)</p>
Recommendation:	<p>Beginning in the 2009-10 school year, the school district implemented additional technical assistance for school teams when identifying all students with emotional or behavioral disabilities. This has resulted in a decrease in the identification of black students in the area of EBD.</p> <p>It is recommended that this practice continue and include technical assistance for identification of students with intellectual disabilities.</p>
Required Action:	N/A
<b>Status Update 2013-14 Monitoring Visit:</b>	<p>The school district addressed this target area as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The <i>MTSS Guide for Behavior</i>, a manual that specifically addresses problem solving around behavior issues, was developed by the district to clarify the three tiers for behavioral support.</li> <li>2) Behavior Technician positions were created to address individual student behavioral needs. These behavior technicians were provided professional development and training through the program titled "Behavioral Tools."</li> <li>3) The district purchased and implemented the use of iReady software for MTSS tracking purposes and interventions.</li> <li>4) Anna Winneker, Problem-Solving Facilitator, PBS:MTSS, has assisted the district in the development of the action plan and in addressing issues related to their database, MTSS for behavior and continuous implementation of PBS for schools that have opted to participate. There is a plan for a yearly workshop to address concerns regarding disproportionate representation within the district.</li> </ol>

### Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-Site Visit

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	
Summary:	<p>For the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, the Manatee County School District was below the enrollment group and state averages for regular class placement. Additionally, during the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, the school district was higher than its enrollment group and state averages for resource room placement.</p> <p>Beginning in the 2011-12 school year, improvements were made in all areas of LRE. This has resulted in an increase of regular classroom placement by 27 percent from the 2011-12 to the 2013-14 school year. This is well above the average for the enrollment group and the state.</p> <p>Subsequent to the on-site monitoring visit, the Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) assessment was conducted by 31 BPIE team members. Results were shared with SST members.</p>
Recommendations:	It is recommended that improvement strategies in this area, as well as those identified in the BPIE action plan, be continued.
Required Actions:	N/A
<b>Status Update 2013-14 Monitoring Visit:</b>	<p>The district collaborated with FIN to complete the BPIE assessment in September 2014. The following priority indicators were selected:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) District analyzes data to identify barriers and initiate improvement steps that increase the number of students with low and high incidence disabilities in general education and natural contexts in every school.</li> <li>13) District and school leaders receive ongoing and current information and professional development about best practices for inclusive education for all students with disabilities.</li> <li>14) District provides job-embedded, collaborative Professional Development (PD) and Technical Assistance (TA) to all schools to integrate IEP goals and objectives and the Florida Standards in general education classes and natural contexts.</li> <li>15) District provides ongoing PD and TA to all school leaders on the implementation of a flexible scheduling process and collaborative teaching service delivery models to provide instruction and support to all students with disabilities in general education contexts, regardless of the type or severity of their disability.</li> <li>17) District provides ongoing, job-embedded, collaborative PD and TA to school-based personnel to implement best practices for inclusive education, including instruction and assessment for all students with disabilities based on the Florida Standards.</li> </ol>
Dropout rate	
Summary:	The dropout rate for students with EBD decreased from 12 percent to 4 percent from the 2009-10 to the 2011-12 school year. This percentage was lower than the enrollment group and the state average for students with emotional or behavioral disabilities.

<b>Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-Site Visit</b>	
	The dropout rate for students with disabilities was not a primary focus of this on-site visit. However, subsequent to visit, the 2014 LEA Profile revealed an increase in this dropout rate for students with EBD: from 4 percent (2011-12 school year) to 8 percent (2012-13 school year).
Recommendations:	N/A
Required Actions:	By <b>January 30, 2015</b> , the Manatee County School District's leadership team shall review this data trend and identify factors contributing to this regression, as well as action steps taken to improve the dropout rates.  These review results are to be submitted to the bureau no later than <b>February 13, 2015</b> .
<b>Status Update 2013-14 Monitoring Visit:</b>	The district collaborated with Project 10 staff to implement a color-coded tracking system used for early warning of students at risk for dropout or delayed graduation. It was noted that challenged students may be transferred to an alternative school. SEDNET has assisted the alternative school site in supporting students with EBD. In addition, the district has partnered with two mental health agencies to participate in a pilot program addressing mental health issues. A referral form for students has been developed to assist them in accessing services.
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process	
Summary	Additional action planning and problem solving for other priorities for the Manatee County School District have been scheduled by the assigned SST liaison for the school district and the ESE director.  By <b>November 28, 2014</b> , the SST team, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan(s) and determine additional next steps, as appropriate.
<b>Status Update 2013-14 Monitoring Visit:</b>	The district presented to BEESS a continuous action plan that consisted of ongoing collaboration among district staff to address target indicators centered on data support and facilitation. The action step was to review the list of reports and queries to determine the most critical for data-based problem-solving around behavior. (Ensuring the integrity of data was addressed in this action step.)  The district submitted Action Plan updates to the SST on the first day of the 2014-15 on-site visit. The updates included documentation of district efforts for internal collaboration to address the issues related to data facilitation and MTSS concerns.

## 2014-15 Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Results

The following data is related to the focus areas and activities for the 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance for the Manatee County School District.

### School Selection

Upon review of the school district's data it was determined that the monitoring and assistance process would involve the following schools for school-level interviews, student focus groups and classroom walk-through visits:

- Blanche E. Daughtrey Elementary School
- William Bashaw Elementary School
- Horizons Academy
- Bayshore High School

### CEIS - Over-identification

Districts are required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA, Part B funds for coordinated early intervening services if students of any race are at least 3.5 times more likely to be identified as disabled compared to all other races. The Manatee County School District has been required since the 2009-10 school year to set aside funds for CEIS over-identification of black students having an EBD. The funds set aside are to be used for students who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral supports in order to succeed in a general education environment.

The district provided a narrative indicating that CEIS funds were used for the behavior technician positions that were created within the district to address individual student behavioral needs. These behavior technicians were provided professional development and training through the program entitled "Behavioral Tools." In addition, the district used CEIS funds for the purchase and implementation of iReady software for MTSS tracking purposes and interventions.

School Year When Funds are Required to be Withheld							
Risk Ratio	4.64	4.52	4.57	4.77	5.14	4.70	4.49

Source: Survey 2 data

### CEIS Interviews

MTSS district staff provided the following information regarding implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports:

- School-wide positive behavior support was being implemented in 20 schools at that time, but training had been limited to Tier 1 prevention.
- Student Services' team developed an MTSS Behavior Guide in August of 2014 to be used in conjunction with the MTSS Academic Guide. The MTSS Behavior Guide describes the problem-solving process applied to behavior, intervention support and progress monitoring at Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3, and documentation of Tier 3 interventions, including a Functional Behavioral Assessment and Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP).

- District-wide implementation of MTSS for behavior has faced multiple barriers including:
  - Fragmented implementation due to frequent starts and restarts with changes in district leadership and the department responsible for implementation
  - Inconsistent communication about expectations of implementation at the school level and the lack of authority for district staff responsible for implementation and training to require implementation with fidelity
  - Multiple initiatives exist to address behavioral issues, but lack of coordination and alignment resulting in parallel systems
  - MTSS seen as “way” to ESE
- No Early Warning System (EWS) or systematic screening (data tools) for emotional or behavioral concerns
- District framework heavily behavioral with limited resources to address mental health issues
- Effective implementation not supported by staffing allocations.

Behavior technicians provided the following information regarding interventions:

- Provision of initial training using the Behavior Tools Basic Practitioner Course and ongoing monthly trainings, topical sessions, and case study
- Good understanding of their role in reducing over-identification
- Request to know more about the data collection process – teacher is the primary data source and responsible for data collection
- Problems occurring when the student’s BIP is not implemented
- Assigned to individual students receiving Tier 3 supports but have limited involvement in problem-solving process
- Assist in implementing and monitoring behavior support plans developed by behavior specialist
- Majority of their time spent providing supports to students with behavioral concerns who have not been identified eligible for ESE services, but also supporting students with disabilities.

An administrator and teachers interviewed at Blanche E. Daughtrey Elementary school noted that the behavior tracker system for minor offenses such as classroom disruption establishes “a paper trail” for the specific behavior and includes notification to the parent about the incident. This information is also used to inform MTSS teams. In addition, the teachers indicated that the iReady software is being utilized with all kindergarten through fifth-grade students for assessment and progress monitoring.

Also noted in interviews with the administrator, teachers and behavior technicians at this elementary school were the following barriers relating to over-identification:

- Lack of community resources, engagement, support and mentors
- Lack of early intervention services available
- Lack of mental health services being provided
- A high percentage (85 percent) of the student population identified as English Language Learners, requiring translators to assist in MTSS meetings
- Behavior technicians not included in MTSS meetings or IEP team meetings, thus not included as a part of the team for academic and behavior planning for each student.
- Insufficient monitoring and follow-up for student behavior plans
- A need for additional professional development and training for behavior tools and supports
- Resistance from some teachers regarding classroom support by the behavior technician
- High turnover for administrative and paraprofessional positions
- Decrease in the number of paraprofessional positions

## Incidents of Seclusion

According to the FDOE's restraint and seclusion database, the total percentage of students with disabilities secluded in Manatee County School District for the 2014-15 school year is **.46** percent while the state average is **.21** percent.

2012- 2013 (August - July)		2013-2014 (August - July)		2014- 2015 (August - May)	
Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students
<b>181</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>34</b>

Source: FDOE, Restraint and Seclusion Database

The following information was provided by teachers and administrators at William Bashaw Elementary School regarding the incidents of seclusion:

- Increasing the support for students in the "EBD Class" (two teachers and one aide per classroom) has helped with student progress (academic and behavioral).
- The principal has implemented strategies to create a welcoming environment for ESE students and families.
- More district support was needed for the following areas:
  - Students with functional behavioral assessments
  - Time with the behavior technician
  - Collecting trend data regarding behavioral incidents
  - Training for all teachers in "Behavior Tools"
- There needs to be stronger alignment of resources between community mental health providers and the school.
- More opportunities for inclusion are needed.
- Instruction needs to be more rigorous, with clear evidence of standards-driven instruction.

## Federal Graduation Rates

Federal Graduation Rate for Students with Disabilities			
Total Federal Graduation Rate for Manatee	50%	51%	49%
State Rate	48%	52%	55%

Source: FDOE, Bureau of PK-20 Education Reporting and Accessibility

2013-14 Graduation Data by Racial or Ethnic Category							

**Source:** FDOE, Bureau of PK-20 Education Reporting and Accessibility  
 \*Number of students is less than 10 (including 0)

**District-level Administrators’ Interviews**

District staff indicated that the following interventions were being provided district-wide to address graduation rates for students with disabilities:

- Learning strategies’ courses to gain independent functioning skills (e.g., access to websites, manage grades, Success Maker)
- Encouragement for students to commit to six-week afterschool sessions (American College Testing and Postsecondary Education Readiness Test)
- In-school partnership for Advancement Via Individual Determination with tutors daily (peer-to-peer)
- EWS utilized to track students at risk of meeting graduation requirements
- Incorporation of a graduation coach to assist with EWS and tracking student progress
- Availability of career academies, on-the-job training and Industry certifications

Administration from Bayshore High School identified the following barriers that they believe have contributed to the district’s decrease in graduation rate for students with disabilities:

- Students dropping out due to being short of credit requirements for graduation
- Attendance issues
- Increased rigor for high school diploma including end-of-course exams
- School grading system possibly encouraging schools to make school-centered decisions as opposed to student-centered decisions
- Limited career and technical options for high school students
- Rigor of industry certifications
- Limited career academies
- Variance in discipline referral forms

Additional supports needed as identified by administrators at Bayshore High School included the following:

- Services for students and families for issues outside the classroom
- Student empowerment concerning their individual disabilities
- Wrap-around services beginning at the elementary level and vertically aligned through post-secondary



## Dropout Rates

### Federal Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Manatee	18%	19%	29%
Enrollment Group	20%	18%	17%
State	21%	20%	19%

### Federal Dropout Rate for EBD Students

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Manatee	35%	54%	55%
Enrollment Group	44%	39%	37%
State	42%	43%	39%

### School-level Administrators' Interviews

Elementary, middle and high school administrators from Horizons Academy identified the following steps, procedures, processes that were being provided to address the dropout rate for students with disabilities:

- Positive Behavior Supports
  - Check-In and Check-Out system
  - Counseling groups
  - Behavior contracts
- School-based leadership team that focuses on Tier 1, 2 and 3 interventions for behavior and academics
- Office discipline referral tracking system in place
- Transition specialist to assist with student intake
- Intake meeting conducted for new incoming students

Elementary, middle and high school administrators from Horizons Academy identified the following barriers that they believe have contributed to the district's increase in the dropout rate for students with disabilities:

- Insufficient mental health support to address needs
- Limited time with the school social worker
- Lack of professional development on classroom management
- Student data reporting errors
- Student attendance issues
- Block schedule resulting in gaps in progress monitoring
- Outdated functional behavioral assessments and discipline plans
- Only one transition specialist available at the school
- More mentors and community volunteers needed

Additional supports needed that were identified by the Horizons Academy school administrators included the following:

- Articulation process for students transitioning between computer-based instruction and direct classroom instruction
- Professional development for inclusive instruction

- Therapeutic services to assist transitioning students from elementary to middle school

Bayshore High School administrators identified the following needs to be addressed in order to decrease the dropout rate for students with disabilities:

- More career training options for students
- Wrap-around services to assist with the broad range of student needs
- Age-appropriate curriculum for students identified with intellectual disabilities

### **Teacher-level Interviews**

The teachers from Bayshore High School who participated in the teacher focus group provided the following information:

- Teachers had high expectations and were solution oriented.
- More time was needed during the extended school year for students to master the standards.
- Wrap-around support was minimal.
- There was a lack of district enforcement related to attendance.
- A character mentor program was needed.
- There was a high level of concern related to the lack of differentiated instruction to address the multi-level articulation process.
  - Horizons Academy
    - Teachers need to be creative in their approach to teaching and implementing best practices for inclusion
    - Teachers make every effort to be respectful of the students coming to the school
    - Teachers stated they would like more professional development for implementation of the inclusion model
    - Teachers indicated that once students reached eighth and ninth grade if they did not have enough credits the students would be placed at the school for credit recovery

### **Student Focus Groups**

Students from Bayshore High School and Horizons Academy participated in student focus groups and the following information was provided:

- Overall, students from both groups expressed that they felt safe while at school
- Both groups expressed that they trusted their teachers and indicated that the teachers cared for them
- Both groups expressed a need for more emotional and academic support (mentors, for example)
- Horizons Academy
  - Students indicated frustration with apparent inconsistencies with discipline and assignment to in-school suspension
  - Students liked in-school suspension because they were allowed to use their phones there and they could choose whether or not to do their classwork.
  - Students stated that they wanted more athletic programs and more counseling and mentoring supports at school
- Bayshore High School
  - Students indicated they were frustrated with teachers being more reactive than proactive to their behaviors without consideration for underlying reasons
  - Students reported they had postsecondary goals but were unsure about next steps to be college and career ready.

## **Additional Concern Found While On-Site Regarding LRE Data**

While visiting Blanche Daughtrey Elementary School, BEESS staff discovered a discrepancy with the number students reported in the separate class placement. The school-level data indicated that there were two students reported for the 2014-15 school year in the separate class placement. However, during the classroom walk-through visits, BEESS staff observed there were multiple classrooms within the school identified as self-contained classrooms where students with disabilities spent the majority of their school day.

## **2014-15 Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps**

The district selected the following priority goal statement and desired outcomes:

- District-wide implementation of an efficient and effective MTSS framework to adequately address the academic and behavioral needs of every student to ensure that students graduate college, career, and life ready.
- The goal and desired outcome will be evidenced by district data indicating increasing graduation rates, decreasing dropout rates, proportionate identification for ESE eligibility (risk ratio), and decreasing percentage of ESE eligibilities.
- The first barrier selected to be addressed was a “lack of clear and consistent ‘best practices’ model, buy in, consistency, fidelity and accountability of an MTSS framework (academic and behavior) for ALL students regardless of race, ESE need, SES [socio-economic status], etc.”

Strategies to reduce the selected barrier included the following:

- Conduct critical conversations around adults’ beliefs and biases
- Provide training for all teachers to build the compelling “why”
- Use resource maps created by MTSS Team and the curriculum department
- Review graduation, dropout and EBD eligibility for black students by school
- Analyze disaggregated school data
- Consider the students who are referred for the Instructional Support Team (subgroups)
- Determine the level of district support needed for schools (by tier)
- Provide more direct connection or accountability from the executive directors
- Add directors, curriculum specialists, instructional specialists and ELL specialists to the MTSS Team

On May 20, 2015, the SST and district staff met to continue the problem-solving process for the following district-wide needs:

- Additional professional development
  - Inclusion training for teachers
  - Behavior training to assist with classroom management
  - Training for PBS implementation
- Increased rigor for curriculum and instruction
- Expanded community involvement and mentoring
- More mental health services
- Increased early interventions with emphasis on elementary education
- Expanded postsecondary transition planning (college and career readiness)
- More systematic universal approach
  - Discipline referrals
  - MTSS
  - EWS

<b>2014-15 Next Steps</b>	
<b>Incidents of Seclusion</b>	
Summary:	The total percentage of students with disabilities secluded in Manatee County School District for the 2014-15 school year is <b>.46</b> percent while the state average is <b>.21</b> percent. The district's 2014-17 SP&P states that seclusion incidents would be reduced by two percent. However, the percentage of seclusions has increased.
Recommendation:	N/A
Required Action:	<p>The Manatee County School District must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to track the incidents of seclusion on a quarterly basis</li> <li>• Participate in the state-wide PBS Seclusion Workgroup</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the district must continue to collaborate with SEDNET regarding <b>facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and students with an EBD and their families</b>. Documentation regarding this collaboration and quarterly data must be provided to BEESS through quarterly updates no later than the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>January 15, 2016</b></li> <li>• <b>April 15, 2016</b></li> <li>• <b>June 15, 2016</b></li> </ul>
<b>Graduation Rates</b>	
Summary:	The Manatee County School District's graduation rate for students with disabilities has decreased from <b>51 percent</b> in 2012-13 to <b>49 percent</b> in 2013-14. Graduation rates for both school years are below the state rate of <b>52 percent</b> for 2012-13 and <b>55 percent</b> for 2013-14.
Recommendation:	The Manatee County School District shall consider working with Project 10 to assist the district with continued efforts to increase the graduation rate.
Required Action:	N/A
<b>Dropout Rates</b>	
Summary:	The Manatee County School District's dropout rate for students with disabilities increased from <b>19 percent</b> in 2012-13 to <b>29 percent</b> in 2013-14. The 2013-14 dropout rate of 29 percent is above the state rate of <b>19 percent</b> for the 2013-14 school year.
Recommendation:	N/A

<b>2014-15 Next Steps</b>	
Required Action:	<p>The Manatee County School District will collaborate with the following discretionary projects or other evidence-based support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Project 10: Transition Education Network</b></li> <li>• <b>SEDNET</b></li> </ul> <p><b>By April 15, 2016</b>, the district is to provide BEESS with an update on the status of the activities and collaboration with Project 10 and SEDNET.</p>
<b>CEIS - Over-identification of Black Students, EBD</b>	
Summary:	<p>The Manatee County School District's risk ratio for CEIS over-identification has decreased over the last three years. During the 2013-14 school year the risk ratio was 4.49. Florida has chosen 3.5 as its definition of significant disproportionality for CEIS. In Manatee County School District, black students are 4.49 times more likely to be identified as having an EBD compared to all other races combined.</p>
Recommendation:	<p>It is recommended that the Manatee County School District consider reviewing whether existing students with an EBD are appropriately placed and whether the students are in need of special education services.</p> <p>The Manatee County School District should also consider adding steps to identify students with an EBD who may be demonstrating persistent and consistent emotional or behavioral responses that adversely affect performance in the educational environment.</p> <p>In addition, the district should consider PBS Tier 2 and 3 training to be provided for schools in all schools.</p>
Required Action:	<p>The Manatee County School District will continue its collaboration with PS:Rtl to support the district in the MTSS implementation efforts. The district will provide information regarding this collaboration on a quarterly basis no later than the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>January 15, 2016</b></li> <li>• <b>April 15, 2016</b></li> <li>• <b>June 15, 2016</b></li> </ul>

<b>2014-15 Next Steps</b>	
<b>Additional Concern found regarding LRE Data:</b>	
Summary:	There was an apparent discrepancy found with the students reported in the separate class placement. The school level data indicated that there were two students reported for the 2014-15 school year. However, during the classroom walk-through visits, BEESS staff observed multiple classrooms identified as self-contained where students with disabilities spent the majority of their day.
Required Action:	The Manatee County School District must review the district LRE data for regular class, resource class, separate class, and other separate environment and provide verification to BEESS of the data's accuracy no later than <b>November 16, 2015</b> . Additional actions may be required following BEESS' review.
<b>Phase 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process</b>	
Summary:	By <b>April 15, 2016</b> , the SST, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan(s) and determine additional next steps, as appropriate.

## Commendations

1. The implementation of a district-wide transition specialist at Horizon Academy, the alternative school, to assist with alternative education has improved transition results for the students.
2. The district's discipline rate for (4A and 4B) is lower than the state rate.
3. The district's parent survey rate for Grades K-12 shows that 73 percent of the parents reported satisfaction with services. This rate is higher than the district's enrollment group (48 percent).
4. The district's postschool outcome data represent higher percentages of students with disabilities enrolled in higher education or competitively employed than the district's enrollment group and the state rate.

## Technical Assistance

1. Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavior: *Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders* (Florida's PBS 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 an Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for behavior. These critical components describe systems changes that are necessary for a results-driven ESE system.
2. The district's ESE Policies and Procedures document 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. The school district's document for the 2013-14 through 2015-16 school years may be accessed at <http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
3. 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, may be accessed at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-6212/dps-2011-165.pdf>. This document provides guidance regarding the use, documenting, reporting and monitoring of restraint and seclusion with students with disabilities in school districts, including (a) when restraint or seclusion might be used, (b) considerations when selecting a training program for restraint, (c) what should be documented, (d) parent notification and reporting, and (e) monitoring use. It also contains information about s. 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities.
4. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released School Discipline Guidance in the January 2014, Volume 4, Issue 1 of the Office of Special Education Programs Monthly Update. This package will assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. The resource documents listed below are included in the package, and are available at <http://www.ed.gov/school-discipline>.
  - *Dear Colleague* guidance letter on civil rights and discipline
  - *Guiding Principles* document that draws from emerging research and best practices
  - *Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources* that indexes federal technical assistance and other resources
  - *Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations* that catalogue state laws and regulations related to school discipline

Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance

State Support Team for Manatee County School District

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**Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

The following is a list of acronyms, abbreviations and terms that may be used within this report.

ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
BEESS	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BIP	Behavioral Intervention Plan
BPIE	Best Practices for Inclusive Education
CEIS	Coordinated early intervening services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EBD	Emotional Behavioral Disability
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
EWS	Early Warning System
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
ISS	Instructional Support Services
LEA	Local educational agency
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Support
PAADS	Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PBS:MTSS	Positive Behavior Support/Multi-Tiered System of Supports
PD	Professional development
SEDNET	Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
SP&P	Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures
SST	State Support Team
TA	Technical assistance



Pam Stewart, Commissioner  
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