

**2013-14 Exceptional Student Education
Monitoring and Assistance
On-Site Visit Report**

**Highlands County School District
November 6-8, 2013**



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

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January 27, 2015

Wallace P. Cox, Superintendent
Highlands County School District
426 School Street
Sebring, Florida 33870-4048

Dear Superintendent Cox:

We are pleased to provide you with the **2013-14 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Highlands County School District**. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site monitoring visit to your school district on November 6-8, 2013. Those information sources included interviews with district and school staff, student-focus groups, student record reviews, **Local Educational Agency Profiles, Guiding Questions – District Level Needs Assessment** and an action-planning and problem-solving process. This report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/monitoring/index.stml>.

The 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focused on those State Performance Plan indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for coordinated early intervening services and those indicators that affected equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities. Additionally, the process focused on a shift from ESE compliance to outcomes to prepare all students for college and career readiness, which include: 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.

The Highlands County School District was selected for an on-site visit due to equity and access issues related to: discipline, graduation rate and dropout rate for students with disabilities. The on-site visit was conducted by a state support team (SST) that included bureau and discretionary project staff.

Ms. Pat Landress, director, Student Support Services, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for the on-site visit and throughout the visit. In addition, the principals and other staff members at the schools visited welcomed the SST and demonstrated a commitment to the education of students in the school district.

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

Superintendent Cox
January 27, 2015
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As part of the SST's visit, representatives from the school district's ESE department, the schools visited and other school district staff participated in an action-planning and problem-solving process. This group reviewed the school district's data collected prior to and during the on-site visit, and came to consensus on a priority goal: to ensure that all data systems used in the Highlands County School District for students with disabilities were able to provide valid and reliable data in order to be used for successful problem-solving and planning activities related to student outcomes. An action plan, developed around that goal, will be implemented by the ESE department with the assistance of designated discretionary project staff from the SST.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Highlands 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.

Sincerely,

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

Enclosure

cc: Pat Landress
Cathy Bishop
Patricia Howell
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Vicki Eddy
Jacqueline Roumou

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Highlands County School District

November 6-8, 2013

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

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Highlands County School District

November 6-8, 2013

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 and rules (sections 1001.03(3), 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 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, particularly, but not exclusively, for 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 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focused on those State Performance Plan (SPP) 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 support, and procedural safeguards.
- Indicator 5 – Educational environments:
Percentage of children with IEPs, ages 6 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 three) 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 in the FDOE website.
- Seclusion – Rate of incidents of seclusion, as reported in the FDOE website.

The 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process included four phases:

- Phase 1 was composed of planning activities that occurred in advance of the first on-site visit to the school district. (Completed)
- Phase 2 was the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST). (Completed)
- 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.
- 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 August 27, 2013, the superintendent of the Highlands County School District was informed that the bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: discipline, graduation rate and dropout rate for students with disabilities.

School Selection

Upon review of the school district's data reported for CEIS, disproportionality, incidents of restraint and seclusion, SPP indicators 5 and 10 and additional data provided by the school district, it was determined that the 2013-14 Monitoring and Assistance process would include the following schools:

- Avon Park High School
- Avon Park Middle School
- Hill-Gustat Middle School
- Lake Placid High School
- Lake Placid Middle School
- Sebring High School

Prior to the on-site visit, telephone interviews were conducted with administrators from Avon Park Middle School and Lake Placid High School. These interviews included school district-level administrators.

On-site Activities

SST – On-Site Visit Team

The following state support team members conducted the on-site visit to the school district:

FDOE, BEESS

- Monica Verra-Tirado, chief (co-facilitator)
- Jacqueline Roumou, program specialist, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (co-facilitator)
- Jayna Jenkins, multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) liaison, Student Support Services
- Angela Nathaniel, program specialist, Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems (PAADS)
- Annette Oliver, program specialist, PAADS (co-facilitator)

FDOE, BEESS Discretionary Projects

- Helen Burton, manager, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)
- Lori Garcia, director, Project 10: Transition Education Network
- Amy Looker, project manager, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disabilities
- Heather Mack, regional transition representative, Region 3, Project 10
- Kathleen Mathis, director, FDLRS, Heartland
- Rebecca Sarlo, response to intervention specialist, Regional Differentiated Accountability Support Team
- Michelle White, technical assistance specialist, Positive Behavior Support (PBS):MTSS

Data Collection

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- School-level administrator interviews – 19 participants
- Student focus groups and interviews – four groups, 23 participants
- Completion of IEP Implementation (IPI) and Secondary Transition protocol – six students
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – 23 participants

- Review of data from the school district's **LEA Profiles, Guiding Questions** – District – Level Needs Assessment and data compiled from district data systems

Review of Records

The Highlands County School District was asked to provide the following documents, as applicable, for each of the six students selected for review of IPI:

- IEPs for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years
- Current functional behavioral assessment
- Current behavioral intervention plan
- Discipline and attendance records for the 2013-14 school year
- Progress reports and report cards for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years
- Student's current schedule
- Verification of the provision of related services and accommodations (lesson plans, teacher schedules and therapy logs)

Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

Prior to the on-site visit, the Highlands County School District was provided with questions to use as a guide in the collection of data. SST and district staff reviewed these data during the action-planning and problem-solving process. The school district's questions were related to discipline, graduation rate and dropout rate for students with disabilities. A list of these questions may be found in Appendix A of this report.

Results

The following results reflect the data collected and reviewed through the activities of the 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process for Highlands County School District. Also included are commendations, findings of noncompliance and next steps, as applicable.

Focus Areas – Graduation Rate, Dropout Rate and Discipline

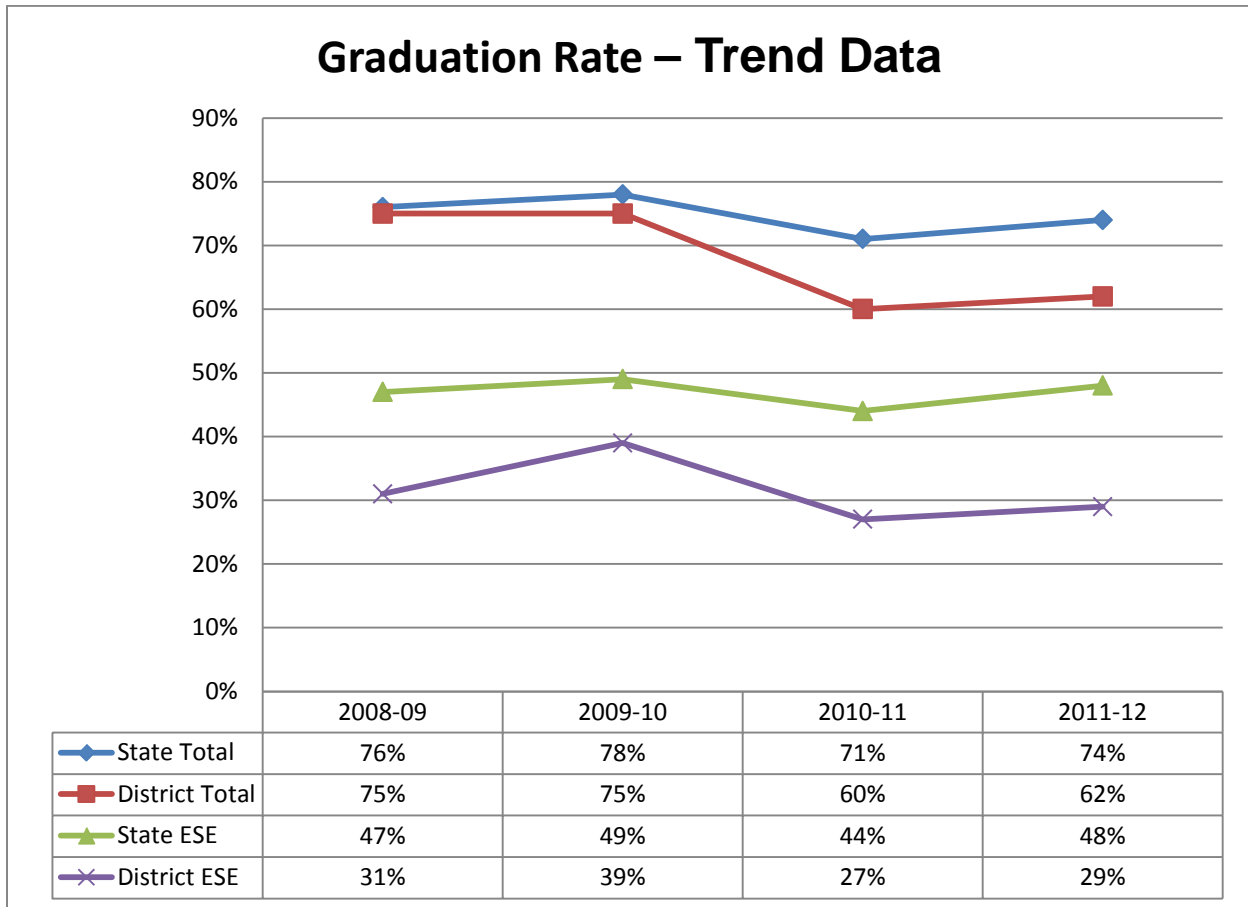
SPP 1 – Graduation Rate

The U.S. Department of Education graduation rate calculation uses the number of first-time ninth graders from four years, plus incoming transfer students on the same schedule to graduate, minus students from this population who transferred from the school district or left the school district to enroll in a private school or home education divided into the number of standard diploma graduates from the same group. The table below shows the high school graduation rates for all students and students with disabilities in the Highlands School District, the enrollment group of medium school districts in Florida and the state.

Federal Uniform High School Graduation Rate				
	All Students		Students with Disabilities	
	2010-11	2011-12	2010-11	2011-12
Highlands County School District	60%	62%	27%	29%
Enrollment Group (Medium School Districts)	72%	76%	42%	49%
State	71%	74%	44%	48%

Source: FDOE, 2013 LEA Profile (<http://www.fldoe.org/ease/datapage.asp>)

Graduation rate trend data are shown in the chart below for the 2008-09 through 2011-12 school years for Highlands County School District and the state's total number of students and for the students with disabilities receiving ESE services in the school district and the state.



Sources: FDOE, LEA Profiles 2012 and 2013 and Highlands County School District

SPP Indicator 2 – Dropout Rate

Dropout rate is the number of students in grades 9-12 for whom a dropout withdrawal reason was reported, divided by the total enrollment of grades 9-12 students and students who did not enter school as expected as reported at the end of the school year (survey 5). Below are the dropout rates for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years for all students, students with disabilities, students with emotional or behavioral disabilities (EBD) and students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) in the Highlands County School District.

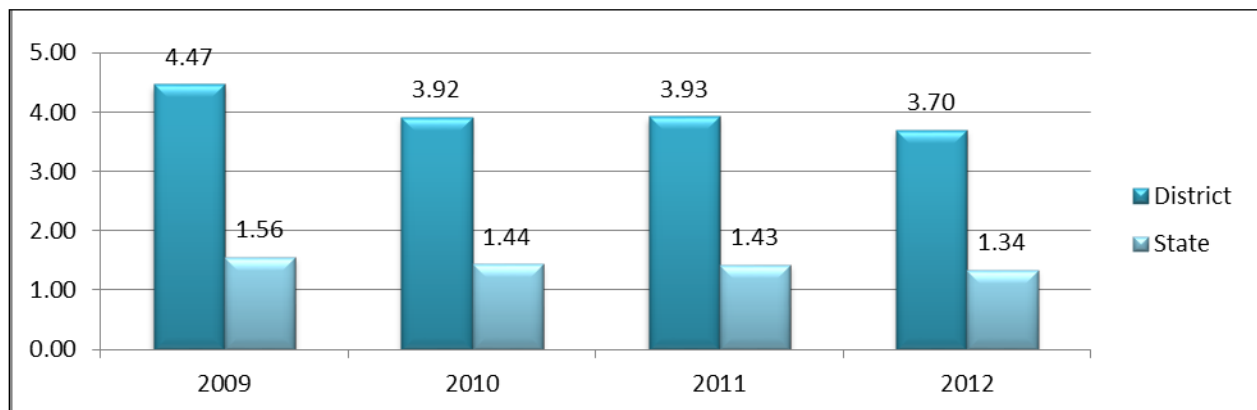
Dropout Rates								
	All Students		Students with Disabilities		Students with EBD		Students with SLD	
	2010-11	2011-12	2010-11	2011-12	2010-11	2011-12	2010-11	2011-12
Highlands County School District	7%	4%	12%	7%	26%	14%	9%	8%
Enrollment Group	2%	2%	4%	3%	8%	7%	4%	4%
State	2%	2%	4%	3%	7%	7%	4%	3%

Source: FDOE, 2013 LEA Profile (<http://www.fldoe.org/ease/datapage.asp>)

SPP Indicator 4 – Discipline (Suspensions and Expulsions)

Discipline rates for students with disabilities and nondisabled students are calculated by dividing the number of students who received out-of-school suspensions or expulsions totaling more than 10 days by total-year enrollment as reported at the end of the school year (survey 5). The risk ratio is calculated by dividing the discipline rate of students with disabilities by the discipline rate of nondisabled students. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that students with disabilities and nondisabled students are equally likely to be suspended or expelled. Below are the discipline risk ratios for 2009-10 through 2011-12 school years.

Discipline Risk Ratios



Source: FDOE, LEA Profiles, 2012 and 2013

Discipline risk ratios by racial or ethnic group are calculated for students with disabilities by dividing the discipline rate of a specific racial or ethnic group by the rate of all nondisabled students. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that, for instance, black students with disabilities are equally likely to be suspended or expelled as all nondisabled students. The discipline risk ratios for students with disabilities by race or ethnicity for Highlands County School District and the state are reported below for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years. Blank cells indicate that there are fewer than 10 students with disabilities for a specific racial or ethnic group suspended or expelled for greater than 10 days.

Discipline Risk Ratios by Race or Ethnicity				
Race or Ethnicity	2010-11		2011-12	
	State	District	State	District
White	0.86	2.24	0.80	2.17
Black	2.81	10.02	2.67	8.32
Hispanic	1.14	2.41	1.01	2.58
Asian	0.32			
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.94		1.03	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Island				
Two or more races	1.26		1.34	

Source: FDOE, LEA Profiles, 2012 and 2013

Student Focus Groups

Student focus groups were conducted at two middle schools and two high schools during the monitoring and assistance on-site visit. Student views were collected on the following topics: IEP team meetings and parental participation, career and technical education, academics, extracurricular activities, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test ® 2.0, diploma options, dropout rate and suspension and expulsion.

Twenty-three students with disabilities participated in the focus groups. Their comments included the following:

High school focus groups

- Overall, the students reported that they felt safe at school.
- Some of the students reported feeling successful in the general education setting. However, there were concerns shared about not receiving needed accommodations.
- Several students reported that they did not understand the diploma options they were pursuing, including implications for postsecondary opportunities.
- Students at one of the two high schools shared that they wanted more information about college but were not aware of how to access that information.
- Students reported that they would like to have more facilities where they can receive help during the summer. They also reported that they would like to have more career and technical opportunities.

Middle school focus groups

- Students at one of the middle schools were able to explain what an IEP team meeting is and reported to have attended an IEP team meeting in the past year.
- At one of the middle schools, most of the students reported that they were taking all general education courses and treated the same as everyone else. At the other school, students reported that they felt as if they were treated differently and reported concerns of being bullied.
- Almost all of the students reported that they participate in the general assessment.
- Students reported that displaying the following behaviors will result in in-school suspension: being late to class three or more times, chewing gum or eating candy in class and misbehaving in class when there is a substitute teacher. They reported that the following behaviors could result in out-of-school suspension: fighting, yelling, being disrespectful to a teacher or misbehaving on the bus.
- In reference to discipline, several of the students at one of the middle schools reported concerns that minority students are not treated the same as other students and are more likely to receive a discipline referral.

Commendations

1. Between the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, Highlands County dropout rate:
 - a. Decreased from 12 to 7 percent for students with disabilities.
 - b. Decreased from 26 to 14 percent for students identified with EBD.
 - c. Decreased from 9 to 8 percent for students with SLD.

- d. Subsequent to the 2013-14 onsite visit, the 2014 LEA Profile revealed that for the 2012-13 school year the dropout rate held steady at 7 percent for students with disabilities and decreased to 6 percent for students with SLD.

ESE Monitoring and Compliance

Records Review

Bureau staff reviewed records of six students in the Highlands County School District. Standards from the IPI protocol were reviewed. During this review, one record was noted to have findings of noncompliance (FNC) for the measurable postsecondary goals standard.

Student Records Review	
Number of IPI protocols completed	6
Number of standards per IPI protocol	8
Number of Secondary Transition protocols completed	1
Number of standards per Secondary Transition protocol	2
Total number of standards assessed	50
Total number of FNC	2
Overall percentage for FNCs	4%
Total number of different standards for which noncompliance was identified	2
Standards with FNC:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are measurable postsecondary goals in the designated areas (i.e., education, training, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills). (34 CFR §300.320(b)(1); Rule 6A-6.03028(3)(h)10a, Florida Administrative Code [F.A.C.] • The IEP includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon: an age-appropriate transition assessment; transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals; and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition services needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority. (34 CFR §§300.320(b)-(c) and 300.321(b); Rule 6A-6.03028(3)(b)-(c) and (h), F.A.C.) 	

On August 26, 2014, a student-specific correction letter was sent to the director of the Highlands County School District's Student Services Support and included the following:

- As part of the monitoring activities, bureau staff reviewed six students' records. Noncompliance was identified for T16-9 and T16-16 (related to measurable postsecondary goals). Identifying information regarding the student in question, including the specific noncompliance identified, was attached.

- The school district was required to amend the student’s IEP to include measurable postsecondary goals for education and training. Generally, changes to the IEP must be made by the entire IEP team at an IEP team meeting. However, in making changes to a student’s IEP after the annual IEP team meeting, the parent and the school district may agree not to convene an IEP team meeting to make those changes, and instead may develop a written document to amend the student’s current IEP. If changes are made to the student’s IEP without a meeting, the school district must ensure that the student’s IEP team is informed of those changes. Upon request, the parents must be provided with a revised copy of the IEP with the amendment(s) incorporated.
- Evidence of the completion of the individual corrective action was required to be provided to the bureau **no later than October 1, 2014**. **[This was completed on 9/30/14, and verified by BEESS as sufficient.]**
- In addition, no later than **August 26, 2015**, the school district must demonstrate correct implementation of the standards identified as noncompliant during the on-site visit. A sampling process is described in the **Exceptional Student Education Compliance Manual** accessible at <http://www.fl DOE.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/monitoring>.

Note: Documentation verifying completion of all components of the corrective action must be received in accordance with the timeline established above, but in no case longer than one year from the date of formal identification (**August 26, 2015**).

Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps

As part of the monitoring and assistance on-site visit, the SST members, ESE director and representatives from the Highlands County School District participated in an action-planning and problem-solving process. The group reviewed the data collected prior to and during the on-site visit and developed a list of priorities and obstacles. An action plan was developed to address the first priority selected: **to ensure that all data systems used in the Highlands County School District for students with disabilities are able to provide valid and reliable data for use in successful problem-solving and planning activities related to student outcomes.** The action plan will be implemented by the ESE department with the assistance of designated discretionary project staff from the SST.

Next Steps	
SPP 1 – Graduation Rates	
Summary	<p>The Highlands County School District was identified as having a low percent of students with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the 2010-11 school year, the school district’s graduation rate for students with disabilities was 27 percent. • For the 2011-12 school year, the school district’s graduation rate for students with disabilities was 29 percent. The 2014 LEA Profile identified the graduation rate for the school district as 28 percent for the 2012-13 school year. • For the 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, the state’s graduation for students with disabilities was 44 percent, 48 percent and 52 percent, respectively.

Next Steps	
Recommendations	None
Required Actions	<p>Recent legislative changes in Florida that allow all students to earn a standard diploma, combined with a better-prepared 2014-15 ninth grade cohort, should assist in the efforts to improve these results. It is imperative that the Highlands County School District ensure that current ninth grade students are enrolled in courses that will contribute to their graduation success. Students who participate in the alternate assessment and who are instructed on access points should be enrolled in access or higher level courses.</p> <p>All other students with disabilities pursuing a standard diploma must be enrolled in general education courses. Fundamental, access or ESE courses that have been deleted from the Course Code Directory would not be appropriate courses for enrollment for these students.</p> <p>The Highlands County School District will review course enrollments for all students with disabilities in ninth grade and provide a report to BEESS by March 31, 2015.</p>
SPP 2 – Dropout Rates	
Summary	<p>Between the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, the Highlands County dropout rate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased from 12 to 7 percent for students with disabilities. • Decreased from 26 to 14 percent for students identified with EBD. • Decreased from 9 to 8 percent for students with SLD. • Subsequent to the 2013-14 onsite visit, the 2014 LEA Profile revealed that for the 2012-13 school year the dropout rate held steady at 7 percent for students with disabilities and decreased to 6 percent for students with SLD.
Recommendations	At least quarterly, the Highlands County School District should continue to review data regarding dropout and work with the SST and BEESS staff to further reduce the dropout rates for students with disabilities in the school district.
Required Actions	Refer to Phases 3 and 4 below
SPP 4 – Discipline	
Summary	<p>The discipline risk ratio for students with disabilities in the Highlands County School District who were suspended or expelled for greater than 10 days far exceeds the state rate for the 2010-11 through 2012-13 school years. The school district's discipline risk ratios for these three years were 3.93, 3.70 and 3.41, compared to the state's risk ratios of 1.43, 1.34 and 1.21.</p> <p>According to the 2014 LEA Profile for the 2012-13 school year, the discipline risk ratio for black students in the Highlands County School District was 8.10, compared to the state's discipline risk ratio of 2.49. This ratio of 8.10 was lower than the 2011-12 school year rate of 8.32 and the 2010-11 school year rate of 10.02, but overall, this school district's discipline risk ratios for black students have greatly exceeded</p>

Next Steps	
	the state risk ratios.
Recommendations	None
Required Actions	By March 13, 2015 , the Highlands County School District will review current school and district policies related to student code of conduct to determine patterns of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions for black students. This review will include how suspensions and expulsions compare to other students in the school district. The results of this review will be submitted to BEESS no later than March 31, 2015 .
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process	
Summary	<p>During the monitoring and assistance on-site visit, there was a consensus that the Highlands County School District will ensure that all data systems used in the school district for students with disabilities are able to provide valid and reliable data for use in successful problem-solving and planning activities related to student outcomes.</p> <p>In addition to this selected priority, the school district must continue their action planning and problem solving in regard to the graduation rate, dropout rate and discipline.</p> <p>According to s. 1003.57, F.S., once every three years, each school district and school shall complete a Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) assessment with a Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) facilitator and include the results of the BPIE assessment and all planned short-term and long-term improvement efforts in the school district's SP&P. BPIE is an internal assessment process designed to facilitate the analysis, implementation and improvement of inclusive educational practices at the district and school team levels. The Highlands County School District completed the BPIE on October 29, 2014.</p>
Recommendations	None
Required Actions	<p>The Highlands County School District must choose one or more evidence-based practices to increase the standard diploma graduation rate, and decrease the dropout rate and discipline risk ratios for the school district and for students who are black.</p> <p>Additional action planning and problem solving for the school district in regard to graduation rate, dropout rate and discipline will be scheduled by the SST liaison identified during the on-site visit and the Highlands County School District's director of Student Support Services. The results of the BPIE must be incorporated into this process.</p> <p>By March 31, 2015, the Highlands County School District will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan(s) and determine additional next steps, as appropriate. The results of that evaluation must be reported by the school district to BEESS by April 13, 2015.</p>

Technical Assistance

1. **Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) 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 and provides an overview of the critical components of an 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; and
 - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations** that catalogue State laws and regulations related to school discipline.
5. The Project 10: Transition Education Network, <http://www.projct10.info/>, assists Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and post-school outcomes. Project 10 serves as the primary conduit between the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services and school district personnel in addressing law and policy, effective practices, and research-based interventions in the area of transition services for youth with disabilities. The project also supports transition initiatives developed through the BEES Strategic Plan.

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

2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance

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Appendix A

Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

Appendix A: Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

1. What are the most current data levels on each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
2. What is the gap between BEESS expected level(s) of targeted indicators and your district's current level(s) of targeted indicators?
3. Do data indicate equity issues related to the selected BEESS indicators? Are there subgroups for which the gap between expected and goal levels of performance and current levels of performance is more or less significant?
 - Gender
 - Race or ethnic group
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - Students with disabilities (by each subgroup)
 - English language learners
 - Comparison within and across above subgroups
4. Disaggregate district-level indicator data to school levels. Which schools are contributing to total district frequency for each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
5. Disaggregate school-level indicator data by grade level. Which grades within each school are contributing to total school frequency for each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
6. Disaggregate between type of school (elementary, middle school and high school) by student outcomes.
7. What evidence-based practices are currently planned for use or implementation at the school level?
8. Are the expected evidence-based practices occurring sufficiently?
9. If expected evidence-based practices are not occurring or not occurring sufficiently, why not? (What are some potential barriers specific to targeted BEESS indicators at the school level?)
10. How are school-level evidence-based practices being supported by the district specific to BEESS indicators being targeted for improvement?
11. Are district supports for school-level practices being provided sufficiently?
12. If district supports are not occurring or not occurring sufficiently, why not? (What are some potential barriers specific to targeted BEESS indicators at the district level?)
13. What strategies, initiatives and resources have been identified in the District Improvement and Assistance Plan (DIAP) with regard to achieving annual measurable outcomes targets for students with disabilities?
14. As applicable, has the mid-year reflection based on mid-year assessment data been completed, and what, if any, adjustments have been made to the DIAP with regard to strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities?
15. What does the **ESE Policies and Procedures** document reflect with regard to the district's goal to improve targeted indicator performance? Did the district achieve the goal set during the prior year?
16. What is occurring to implement the strategies in the SP&P with regard to targeted indicator performance?
17. Based on all of the above answers, what priorities will be targeted to improve BEESS targeted indicators?

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

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

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

BEES	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BPIE	Best Practices for Inclusive Education
CEIS	Coordinated early intervening services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EBD	Emotional or behavioral disability
ESE	Exceptional student education
F.A.C.	Florida Administrative Code
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
FNC	Finding of noncompliance
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
IPI	IEP implementation
LEA	Local educational agency
MTSS	Multi-tiered system of support
PAADS	Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems
PBS	Positive behavior support
SLD	Specific learning disability
SP&P	Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures
SPP	State Performance Plan
SST	State Support Team



Pam Stewart, Commissioner

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