

FINAL REPORT OF FOCUSED MONITORING OF  
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

# **COLUMBIA COUNTY**

APRIL 14 - 16, 2003



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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November 3, 2003

Mr. Michael Flanagan  
Columbia County School District  
528 W. Duval Street  
Lake City, Florida 32055

Dear Superintendent Flanagan:

We are pleased to provide you with the Final Report of Focused Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs in Columbia County. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information including student record reviews; interviews with school and district staff; information from focus groups; and parent, teacher, and student survey data from our visit on April 14-16, 2003. The report includes a System Improvement Plan outlining the findings of the monitoring team. The final report will be placed on the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services' website and may be viewed at [www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm).

The Bureau has sent Chris Bond, ESE Director, an electronic copy of the System Improvement Plan for development. Within 30 days of the receipt of this electronic copy, the district is required to submit the completed System Improvement Plan for review by our office. Bureau staff will work with Chris Bond and her staff to develop the required system improvement measures, including strategies and activities to address the areas of concern and noncompliance identified in the report. We anticipate that some of the action steps that will be implemented will be long term in duration, and will require time to assess the measure of effectiveness. In addition, as appropriate, plans related to the district's continuous improvement monitoring may also relate to action steps proposed in response to this report. After the System Improvement Plan has been approved, it will also be placed on the Bureau's website.

SHAN GOFF

*K-12 Deputy Chancellor for Student Achievement*

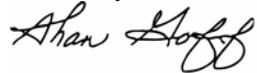
Mr. Michael Flanagan  
November 3, 2003  
Page 2

An update of outcomes achieved and/or a summary of related activities, as identified in your district's plan, must be submitted by June 30 and December 30 of each school year for the next two years, unless otherwise noted on the plan. A follow-up monitoring visit to your district will take place two years after your original monitoring visit.

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

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

Sincerely,



Shan Goff  
K-12 Deputy Chancellor for Student Achievement

Enclosure

**Columbia County School District  
Focused Monitoring Visit  
April 14-16, 2003**

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**Columbia County School District  
Focused Monitoring Visit  
April 14-16, 2003**

**Executive Summary**

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all laws and rules (Sections 1001.03(8) and 1008.32, Florida Statutes (F.S.)). In fulfilling this requirement, the Bureau conducts monitoring activities of the exceptional student education (ESE) programs provided by district school boards in accordance with Sections 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and programs of exceptional student education (ESE); provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (Section 300.1(d) of the Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)), and districts are required to make a good faith effort to assist children with disabilities to achieve their stated goals and objectives in the least restrictive environment (34 CFR Sections 300.350(a)(2) and 300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA are carried out and that each educational program for children with disabilities administered in the state meets the educational requirements of the state (34 CFR Section 300.600(a)(1) and (2)).

During the week of April 14, 2003, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, conducted an on-site review of the exceptional student education programs in Columbia County Public Schools. Chris Bond, Exceptional Student Education Director, served as the coordinator and point of contact for the district during the monitoring visit. In its continuing efforts to focus the monitoring process on student educational outcomes, the Bureau has identified four key data indicators: percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers); dropout rate for students with disabilities; percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma; and participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities. Columbia County was selected for monitoring on the basis of the rate of students with disabilities who exit school with a standard diploma. The results of the monitoring process are reported under five categories or related areas that are considered to impact or contribute to the key data indicator. In addition, information related to services for gifted students and the results of records and forms reviews are reported.

**Summary of Findings**

**General Information**

Columbia County is a middle/small district with a highly mobile population due to its location at the intersection of three major highways. There are two multi-county facilities

for students with severe disabilities. There are also four prisons in the area which may account for some of the mobility of single parent families.

### **Access**

Generally, students with disabilities access the general curriculum through the regular classroom. Discussions regarding placement in the regular curriculum and access to FCAT testing begin in the elementary grades and continue through middle and high school. Schools in the Columbia County School District offer students with disabilities a variety of placement options. Students are provided accommodations in the regular classrooms, and are afforded the same FCAT preparation materials and instruction as the other students. There were concerns that the service delivery models found at one high school and one middle school limit student access to the regular curriculum.

### **Decision-Making**

Decisions regarding diploma options for students with disabilities are made at transition IEP meetings held at the end of the eighth grade school year. These meetings are attended by staff from both the middle and high schools, with parents and students in attendance. There was concern that the placement decisions made at one high school may limit student access to the standard curriculum and thus to the standard diploma option.

### **Stakeholder Opinions**

There was not a consensus among the stakeholders as to why Columbia County School District had a low rate of students graduating with a standard diploma. Many of the interviewees felt that the data on the key indicator was not correct. Other opinions that the low rate of students graduating with a standard diploma were due to the highly mobile population, low expectations of parents and school staff, overcrowding of some classes, lack of student willingness to continue their education beyond 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and early placement in full-time ESE.

### **Gifted Services**

The Columbia County School District provides services to students identified as gifted at the Chrysalis Learning Center (Center). This facility, housing classrooms and a computer lab, is staffed by two teachers and one paraprofessional. Students from grades 2-8 are bused to the Center from the elementary and middle schools and are assigned to the gifted classrooms one day a week.

### **Record Reviews**

During the formal record reviews carried out as a part of the focused monitoring procedures, 26 individual educational plans (IEPs) of students with disabilities were reviewed for compliance. Findings of noncompliance for two of the IEPs will result in fund adjustments. On-site matrix reviews found five records with either clerical errors or lack of documented support. Twenty-four of the IEPs will require reconvening the IEP team due to lack of measurable goals. Specific and systemic findings are identified later in this report. Two IEPs for gifted students were reviewed.

## **Forms Reviews**

During the forms review findings representing the following actions were found to require modifications or revisions:

- Informed Notice and Consent for Initial Placement
- Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation
- Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation
- Informed Notice of Change of Placement
- Informed Notice of Change in FAPE (free appropriate public education)
- Informed Notice of Refusal
- Informed Notice of Dismissal
- Informed Notice of Ineligibility
- Documentation of Staffing Eligibility Determination
- Notice of Confidentiality of Student Records

## **System Improvement Plan**

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

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



## Columbia County School District Focused Monitoring System Improvement Strategies

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

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
General Information	Data input errors may have led to the district being selected for focused monitoring.	X		Provide training for MIS data entry staff prior to February, 2004.	A random annual check of student information for 15 students on the MIS system by ESE district staff will show 100% correlation with student records.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Access	Varying exceptionalities classes in the block schedule at Richardson Middle School may provide limited opportunities for students with disabilities to access the regular curriculum standards.	X		Restructure service delivery model during the 2003-04 school year to eliminate block schedule and provide instruction according to individual student performance levels. Provide access to the general education curriculum on a daily basis.	District staff semi-annually will conduct a review of student schedules. A random check of 20 folders will show 100% of the students monitored had access to the general curriculum.
Decision-Making	ESE students are often placed in restrictive settings at Fort White High School, preventing them from gaining access to the general curriculum and a standard diploma.	X		The district will provide a Diploma Option Access meeting to all parents and students in January, 2004. Provide teacher training regarding options. The district IEP form has been revised to include additional information to parents and students regarding diploma options.	Columbia County will increase the number of ESE students graduating with a standard diploma by 10% during the 2003-04 school year.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Gifted Services	There are no services for gifted students at the high school level.	X		Annual EP review will be held in conjunction with the development of graduation plan for eighth graders to document services at the secondary level. A parent meeting for students who are gifted will be held prior to February, 2004 to discuss district services at the secondary level.	The district will develop a matrix of services for gifted students at the secondary level by the end of the 2003-04 school year. A random check of 10 secondary students identified as gifted will reveal they are receiving services at the secondary level, as determined by their EP during the 2004-05 school year.
Record Reviews	The review of IEPs resulted in the following findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="443 948 827 1084">Fund adjustments will be required for two IEPs that lack informed notice of change of placement.</li> </ul>	X		District forms have been modified and district staff trained in the use of <i>notice of change of placement</i> forms. An updated checklist for self-monitoring for compliance will be provided to the staffing committee.	Forms will be sent to DOE for review. An annual district staff review of 20 records will reveal compliance at 100% for required components.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="443 358 879 496">• IEPs for 24 students with disabilities are required to be reconvened due to lack of a majority of measurable goals.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="443 797 879 857">Five matrices had clerical errors and lack of documentation.</p>	X		<p data-bbox="1098 358 1562 570">A district wide training will be held in September to address present levels of performance and annual goals, matrix training update, and a review of the IEP components for all ESE teachers in the district.</p> <p data-bbox="1098 578 1562 678">A second matrix and IEP training for new and second year staff will be held in January, 2004.</p> <p data-bbox="1098 686 1562 753">The identified IEP;s will be reconvened prior to October, 2004.</p>	<p data-bbox="1591 358 1898 753">Copies of the reconvened IEP's will be forwarded to DOE for review. A random district staff monitoring of 20 IEP's annually will reveal 100% compliance for appropriate present levels and measurable annual goals.</p>
		X		<p data-bbox="1098 797 1562 971">A district wide training will be held in September to address present levels of performance and annual goals, matrix training update, and a review of the IEP for all teachers.</p> <p data-bbox="1098 979 1562 1079">The new computerized IEP's have been programmed to automatically calculate matrix totals.</p> <p data-bbox="1098 1088 1562 1227">Additionally, the computerized IEP program will cross reference key terms before allowing matrix levels to be checked.</p>	<p data-bbox="1591 797 1898 1079">A random district staff monitoring of 20 IEP's annually will reveal that 100% of the matrixes are added correctly and have appropriate supportive documentation.</p> <p data-bbox="1591 1088 1898 1260">The new computerized IEP's have been programmed to automatically calculate matrix totals.</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews (continued)	<p>Findings of noncompliance on IEPs primarily were related to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of attendance by the general education teacher, no documentation indicating any input from the general education teacher</li> <li>• present level statements did not address the effects of the students' progress in the general curriculum</li> <li>• lack of measurable annual goals</li> <li>• lack of correspondence between the present level, annual goals, and short-term objectives</li> <li>• lack of appropriate description of special education services</li> <li>• lack of appropriate location for services</li> </ul>	X		<p>A general education teacher will be invited to every IEP meeting.</p> <p>District wide training will be held in September to address present levels of performance and annual goals, matrix training update, and a review of the IEP for all teachers.</p> <p>Appropriate support documentation required for the matrix levels and the district process for notice to parents of progress to annual goals was reviewed.</p> <p>A second matrix and IEP training for new staff will be held in January, 2004.</p> <p>Additionally, a Quality IEP session will be scheduled during the annual ESE summer training institute.</p> <p>The identified IEP's will be reconvened prior to the end of October, 2004, following teacher training to insure quality components.</p>	<p>A district staff semi-annual random monitoring of 20 IEP's will reveal 100% contained documentation of input from the general education teacher at IEP meetings.</p> <p>A random district staff monitoring of 20 IEP's annually will reveal 100% compliance for the following quality indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• correspondence between the present level, annual goals, and short-term objectives</li> <li>• appropriate description of special education services</li> <li>• appropriate location for services</li> <li>• initiation and duration dates, frequency, and location of accommodations and/or modification</li> <li>• present level, annual goals, short-term objectives did not support the services on the IEP</li> </ul>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of initiation and duration dates, frequency, and location of accommodations and /or modification</li> <li>• present level, annual goals, short-term objectives did not support the services on the IEP</li> <li>• lack of statement of progress toward the annual goals</li> <li>• lack of documentation of student performance on state or district assessment</li> </ul>	X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement of progress toward the annual goals</li> <li>• Documentation of student performance on state or district assessment</li> </ul> <p>The new computerized IEP's have been programmed to automatically calculate matrix totals and cross reference key terms prior to accepting matrix levels.</p>
Forms Reviews	<p>Forms used to document the following activities must be revised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</li> <li>• Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation</li> <li>• Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Change of Placement</li> </ul>	X		All forms have been updated and revised in 8/03	Updated forms will be forwarded to DOE by fed-ex mail by September 22, 2004, for review.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Forms Reviews (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed Notice of Change in FAPE (free appropriate public education)</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Refusal</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Dismissal</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Ineligibility</li> <li>• Documentation of Staffing Eligibility Determination</li> <li>• Notice of Confidentiality of Student Records</li> </ul>				



# **Monitoring Process**

## **Authority**

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all laws and rules (Sections 1001.03(8) and 1008.32, Florida Statutes (F.S.)). In fulfilling this requirement, the Bureau conducts monitoring activities of the exceptional student education (ESE) programs provided by district school boards in accordance with Sections 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and programs of exceptional student education (ESE); provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (Section 300.1(d) of the Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and districts are required to make a good faith effort to assist children with disabilities to achieve their stated goals and objectives in the least restrictive environment (34 CFR §§300.350(a)(2) and 300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA are carried out and that each educational program for children with disabilities administered in the state meets the educational requirements of the state (34 CFR §300.600(a)(1) and (2)).

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

## **Focused Monitoring**

The purpose of the focused monitoring process is to implement a methodology that targets the Bureau's monitoring intervention on key data indicators that have been identified as significant for educational outcomes for students. Through this process, the Bureau will use such data to inform the monitoring process, thereby implementing a strategic approach to intervention and commitment of resources that will improve student outcomes.

## **Key Data Indicators**

Four key data indicators were recommended by the monitoring stakeholders' workgroup and were adopted for implementation by the Bureau. The key data indicators for 2003 school year and their sources of data are as follows

- percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers) (data source: Survey 9)
- dropout rate for students with disabilities (data source: Survey 5)
- percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma (data source: Survey 5)
- participation in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) by students with disabilities (data sources: performance data from the assessment files and Survey 3 enrollment data)

## **District Selection**

Districts were selected to be monitored based on a review of data from the 2001-02 school year that was submitted electronically to the Department of Education (DOE) Information Database for Surveys 2, 3, 5, 9, and from the assessment files. This data is compiled into an annual data profile for each district (LEA Profile). The 2003 LEA profiles for all Florida school districts are available on the web at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/datapage.htm>.

In making the decision to include the Columbia County School District in this year's focused monitoring visits, Bureau staff reviewed data related to the rate of students with disabilities exiting the school system with a standard diploma taken from survey 5. This review indicated that Columbia County's rate of 30% was the second lowest rate of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma in the state. Columbia County School District's LEA profile and the listing of districts rank-ordered for the standard diploma graduation rate for students with disabilities is included in this report as appendix B.

## **Sources of Information**

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

The Bureau conducted the on-site focused monitoring visit during the week of April 14, 2003. A team composed of six DOE staff, four contracted staff including three University of Miami research staff, and three peer monitors conducted site-visits. Peer monitors are exceptional student education personnel from other school districts who are trained to assist with the DOE's monitoring activities. A listing of all participating monitors is provided as appendix C.

### **Interviews**

Interviews with selected district- and school-level personnel are conducted using interview protocols developed specifically to address the key data indicator. In addition to the protocol developed specifically to examine standard diploma graduation rate for

students with disabilities, separate protocols are used to address services to gifted students, services provided in charter schools, and services to students served in juvenile justice facilities. In Columbia County, the monitoring team conducted a total of 54 interviews, including four district interviews, 21 school administrators or support staff interviews, 18 ESE teacher interviews, and 11 general education teacher interviews.

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

Focus groups for parents, teachers and students are conducted by the University of Miami to gather information related to the participation rate in statewide assessments. In order to provide maximum opportunity for input about the district's ESE services, a minimum of four separate focus group interviews are conducted. Focus groups are held for parents of students with disabilities, teachers, students with disabilities pursuing a standard diploma, and students with disabilities pursuing a special diploma. Separate focus group sessions are held for each group of participants.

In conjunction with the 2003 Columbia County monitoring activities, 10 parents participated in the parent focus group, representing 11 students with disabilities in elementary and middle school. Four ESE teachers, representing elementary through high school, participated in the teacher focus group. Two students participated in the standard diploma student focus group. Permission slips to attend the focus groups had been sent to the parents/guardians of approximately 60 ESE students who were working toward a standard diploma. Only two parents had returned slips. No permission slips had been sent to the parents/guardians of special diploma students.

Due to the low numbers of participants in the student focus groups, this data is not reported.

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

Student case studies are conducted for the purpose of performing an in-depth review of the services a student receives in accordance with his or her IEP. The on-site selection of students for the case studies at each school is based on criteria that have been identified as being historically characteristic of students who may have the cognitive ability to participate in statewide assessments and have not participated in the FCAT. As part of this process, the student's records are reviewed, monitors observe the student in class, and teachers are interviewed regarding the implementation of the IEP. Thirteen in-depth case studies were conducted in Columbia County.

### ***Classroom Visits***

Classroom visits are conducted in both ESE and general education classrooms. Some visits are conducted in conjunction with individual student case studies, while others are conducted as general observations of classrooms that include exceptional students. Curriculum and instruction, classroom management and discipline, and classroom design and resources are observed during the general classroom visits. Teachers of the classes visited are interviewed regarding practices related to students with disabilities. A total of 31 ESE and regular education classrooms were visited during the focused monitoring visit to Columbia County at the following schools:

- Columbia High School
- Fort White Middle/Senior High School
- Lake City Middle School
- Richardson Middle School
- Summers Elementary School
- Westside Elementary School
- Challenge Learning Center

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

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

### ***Parent Surveys***

Surveys are mailed to parents of students with disabilities and parents of students identified as gifted. The survey that is sent to parents is printed in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, where applicable. It includes a cover letter, a notice regarding the opportunity to participate in a focus group, and a postage paid reply envelope. In conjunction with the 2003 Columbia County monitoring activities, a total of 1,763 surveys for parents of students with disabilities and 100 surveys for parents of students identified as gifted were mailed. Two hundred and eleven (12%) of the parents of students with disabilities and 28 (28%) of the parents of students identified as gifted responded.

### ***Teacher Surveys***

In addition, surveys for all teachers were mailed to each school, with a memo explaining the key data indicator and the monitoring process. Four Hundred and forty five teachers from 12 schools, representing 72% of all teachers in the district, responded to the teacher survey for Columbia County School District.

### ***Student Surveys***

For students with disabilities across the district in grades 9-12, a teacher conducts the student survey following a written script. Since participation in this survey is not appropriate for some students whose disabilities might impair their understanding of the survey, professional judgment is used to determine appropriate participants. Eighty-one students representing 21% of students with disabilities in grades 9-12, completed the survey.

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

Prior to the on-site monitoring visit, Bureau staff conducts a compliance review of student records that are randomly selected from the population of exceptional students. Twenty-five records were reviewed off-site. The record of at least one student with a matrix rating of 254 or 255 may be reviewed at each school during the on-site visit, if

available. In addition to the compliance reviews, selected student records are reviewed at the school site in conjunction with student case studies and classroom visits.

Selected district forms and notices are also reviewed to determine if the required components are included. The results of the reviews of student records and district forms are described in this report.

## **Reporting Process**

### **Interim Reports**

Daily debriefing sessions are conducted by the monitoring team members in order to review findings, as well as to determine if there is a need to address additional issues or visit additional sites. Preliminary findings and concerns are shared with the ESE director and/or designee through daily debriefings with the monitoring team leader during the monitoring visit. In addition, the district ESE director is invited to attend the final team debriefing with Bureau staff and peer monitors. During the course of these activities, suggestions for interventions or strategies to be incorporated into the district's system improvement plan may be proposed. Within two weeks of the visit, Bureau administrative staff conduct a telephone conference with the ESE director to review major findings.

### ***Preliminary Report***

Subsequent to the on-site visit, Bureau staff prepare a written report. The report is developed to include the following elements: an executive summary, a description of the monitoring process, and the results section. A description of the development of the current monitoring system for exceptional student education is included as an appendix. Other appendices with data specific to the district also accompany each report. The report is sent to the district ESE director. The director will have the opportunity to discuss and clarify with Bureau staff any concerns regarding the report before it becomes final.

### **Final Report**

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

Within 30 days of the district's receipt of the final report, the system improvement plan, including activities targeting specific findings, must be submitted to the Bureau for review. In developing this plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement plan for focused monitoring to the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. In collaboration with Bureau staff, the district is encouraged to develop methods that correlate activities in order to utilize resources, staff, and time in an efficient manner in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Upon approval of the system improvement plan, the plan is posted on the website noted above.



## **Reporting of Information**

The data generated through the surveys, focus group interviews, individual interviews, case studies, and classroom visits are summarized in this report. In addition, the results from the review of student records and district forms are presented in the report. This report provides conclusions with regard to the key data indicator and specifically addresses related areas that may contribute to or impact the indicator. These areas include:

- General Information
- Access
- Decision-making
- Stakeholder Opinion related to the indicator

In addition, information related to services for gifted students, the results of the records reviews, and the results of the forms reviews are reported.

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

It is to be noted that the low participation in the focus group for students with disabilities on a standard diploma track (two) and the fact that the focus group for students with disabilities on a special diploma track could not be held, the student focus group information is not included in this report.

## **Results**

### **General Information**

This general category refers to demographic or other influences that may impact the rate of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma. Columbia County School District has a total school population (PK-12) of 9,701 with 18% identified as students with disabilities (19% of the 18% identified as receiving only speech services), and <1% identified as gifted. Columbia County is considered a "medium/small" district and is one of 14 districts in this enrollment group. Columbia County School District is comprised of eight elementary schools, two middle schools, one combination middle/high school, one high school and one alternative school.

Interviews with four district administrators and 50 school staff members revealed that Columbia County is at the intersection of three major highways, and is considered the “Gateway to Florida.” Columbia County is the first exit off of the interstate coming into Florida from the north, and the last exit leaving Florida from the south. The district reported that many students who come to Columbia County school district come with diploma options already decided.

It was reported that there are four prisons in the area, which have resulted in a large population of single parent families. Columbia County has two multi-county facilities that serve students with severe disabilities. There are many social service organizations available for needy families, which reportedly attract families into the area.

In summary, Columbia County is a middle/small district with a highly mobile population due to its location at the intersection of three major highways. There are two multi-county facilities for students with severe disabilities. There are also four prisons in the area which may account for some of the mobility of single parent families.

### **Access**

This category refers to the types of settings and the curriculum available to students with disabilities and to the effectiveness or quality of instruction. Lack of access to the general curriculum could negatively impact the rate of students who earn a standard diploma.

Interviews of district and school staff found that students with disabilities in the Columbia County School District generally have access to the full continuum of service delivery models. At most schools, there was evidence that students did move between regular education classes and ESE classes as the IEP team felt appropriate. This was supported by records reviews, case studies, and classroom visits. The exception was at Fort White High School (FWHS) where it was reported that most students who are pursuing a standard diploma are placed in all regular education classes with only consultative support.

At most schools, including the Challenge Learning Center (the alternative education center), the ESE teachers (other than self-contained teachers), teach curriculum which parallels the Sunshine State Standards (SSS).

Survey results found that 68% of the teachers agreed that students with disabilities were consistently placed into general education classes whenever possible. While interviews found agreement at all levels that there was training to assist regular teachers in working with students with disabilities in the regular classroom, only 41% of the teachers who responded to the survey marked that the school consistently provided support to general education teachers who teach students with disabilities.

School level interviews indicated that students with disabilities are receiving a variety of accommodations in the regular classroom. Regular education teachers can also get assistance from resource and consultation teachers. There was some concern that regular education teachers were not always in attendance at the IEP meetings and while they

generally received copies of the accommodations, they may not have a full understanding of the implementation of these modifications. This was substantiated by the case studies and classroom visits. In responses to the parent survey, only 54% of the parents agreed that the IEP team discussed accommodations at the IEP meeting. Eighty-four percent of the responses indicated that parents did agree that their children had appropriate goals, while 64% agreed that the teachers gave students with disabilities extra time or different assignments. In the teacher survey, 63% of the teachers indicated that the school modifies and adapts curriculum for students as needed. A review of the student survey found that 78% of the students agreed that regular education teachers give students extra help if needed, and 77% agreed that regular education teachers give ESE students extra time or different assignments if needed. During the parent focus group, parents expressed concern about instructional modifications and accommodations that their children were supposed to receive. Some parents reported that teachers were not providing curricular modifications because they (the teachers) were unaware that the students had IEPs.

There was a concern at Richardson Middle School where most of the ESE students were placed in a varying exceptionalities (VE) model. Due to the block scheduling, the ESE teachers were departmentalized according to subject. As a result, a teacher may teach the regular and modified sunshine state standards for middle school to sixth, seventh and eighth grade students of varying achievement levels in one class period. The regular education and ESE teachers that were interviewed all related that these classes were very large, and no longer had the support of teacher assistants. There was no established curriculum for these classes, so the teachers selected their own text and materials. As a result, as indicated by interviews and classroom visits, these teachers have difficulty assisting students with individual work, and had limited time to spend in consultation with the regular education teachers.

In regard to access to FCAT preparation and testing, it was found that all schools reported that students with disabilities have access to FCAT testing. In general, students with disabilities have access to the same FCAT preparations and supports that are provided to regular education students. The district ESE director stated that the targeted assistance funds allocated to help twelfth grade students who did not pass the FCAT would be used for summer programming. In responding to the survey question about FCAT testing, 81% of the teachers agreed that the school provides students with disabilities appropriate testing accommodations. It is noted that only 45% of the students surveyed agreed that they received accommodations (special testing conditions) for the FCAT, and only 37% agreed that teachers help ESE students prepare for the FCAT.

At the elementary schools, programs like SRA (Science Research Associates) Math and English supplement the regular curriculum. At Westside Elementary, an inclusionary school, the ESE students receive instruction from the regular education teachers with support from ESE teachers based on the individual needs of the students.

In summary, students with disabilities generally access the general curriculum through the regular classroom. Discussions regarding placement in the regular curriculum and access to FCAT testing begin in the elementary grades and continue through middle and

high school. Schools in the Columbia County School District offer students with disabilities a variety of placement options. Students are provided accommodations in the regular classrooms, and are afforded the same FCAT preparation materials and instruction as the other students. There were concerns that the service delivery models found at one high school and one middle school limit student access to the regular curriculum.

### **Decision-Making**

Decision-making refers to the process by which the diploma option decision for a student with a disability is made. Interviews with district and school personnel at the middle and high schools revealed that the formal decision about the diploma option for a student with disabilities is made at the transition IEP meeting attended by representatives from the middle and the high schools at the end of the student's eighth grade year.

Interviewees at both middle schools and high schools stated that at the transition meetings, the IEP team reviews current academic performance, attendance, grades, documentation from the classroom, standardized testing such as the FCAT, and information about the student's behavior. The parent and student have a strong voice in the decision-making. There was some indication from the record reviews and interviews that the regular education teachers were not always present at these meetings. It was reported that parents and students were very reluctant to agree to extend the students' high school stay beyond the traditional four years, in order to earn the necessary credits to graduate with a standard diploma.

The monitoring team had concerns about the process for selecting a diploma option at Fort White High School. A large majority of students with disabilities who are placed on a standard diploma track are provided ESE consultation services only. Interviews with school staff disclosed that, with few exceptions, a student with disabilities who needs direct ESE services for any reason, including behavior, is usually recommended for ESE classes and changed to a special diploma track. Since the ESE teachers in these classes do not teach the regular standards, these students do not have access to the regular curriculum.

The parents were surveyed about diploma options and the decision-making process. When asked if the diploma option was discussed at IEP meetings, 66% of parents with students in grade 8-12 agreed. Fifty-two percent agreed that the team discussed the requirements for different diplomas. Of all parents responding, 71% agreed that the school offered students with disabilities the courses they need to graduate with a standard diploma. Another 75% indicated that their child is aiming for a standard diploma.

In responding to the student survey, 89% of the students stated that they agreed with the type of diploma they were going to receive, 76% indicated they know the difference between a regular and a special diploma, and 52% agreed that they will probably graduate with a regular diploma.

The teacher survey results found that 68% of the teachers believed that schools consistently encourage students to aim for a standard diploma when appropriate.

Elementary and middle school staff reported that the discussions about a student's placement in the regular curriculum and access to FCAT testing begin in the elementary grades and are discussed at the transition meetings held with both schools in attendance at the end of the fifth grade year.

When asked about training for staff and/or parents on how to make appropriate diploma decisions, the majority of the school staff interviewed stated that they had not had training on decision-making strategies for diploma option selection. The district reported that there had been a "diploma options" meeting at the district for parents, and that guidance counselors work with parents to assist them to understand the options. The parents are reportedly given a diploma options book. In the surveys 53% of the parents of students in grades 8-12 indicated that the team had talked about the requirements for different diplomas.

In summary, decisions regarding diploma options for students with disabilities are made at transition IEP meetings held at the end of the eighth grade school year. These meetings are attended by staff from both the middle and high schools, with parents and students in attendance. There was concern that the placement decisions made at one high school may limit student access to the standard curriculum and thus to the standard diploma option.

### **Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Indicator**

This category refers to respondents' views on issues directly related to the low rate of students graduating with a special diploma. There was little consensus in the district as to the reason for the low rate. Many district and school staff questioned the validity of the data that led to the district being selected for focused monitoring. Other opinions on the likely contributors to the low rate of students with disabilities were

- highly mobile and low socio-economic population
- low expectations of parents
- low expectations of school staff
- unwillingness of students to attend an extra year to gain credits
- overcrowded classes
- early placements in restrictive settings

In summary, there was not a consensus among the stakeholders as to why Columbia County School District had a low rate of students graduating with a standard diploma. Many of the interviewees felt that the data on the key indicator was not correct. Other opinions that the low rate of students graduating with a standard diploma were due to the highly mobile population, low expectations of parents and school staff, overcrowding of some classes, lack of student willingness to continue their education beyond 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and early placement in full-time ESE.

### **Gifted Services**

The Columbia County School District provides serves to students identified as gifted at the Chrysalis Learning Center. This facility, housing classrooms and a computer lab, is staffed by two teachers and one paraprofessional. Students from grades 2-8 are bused to the Center from the elementary and middle schools and are assigned to the gifted classrooms by grade. The students are served one day a week and spend the day at the center. One of the teachers works with grades 2-5 and the other serves students 5-8. It was reported that there are a few students who would not function well in a pull-out enrichment program, who are served on a consultative model.

In interviews, the gifted teachers explained that the curriculum is “total enrichment.” One teacher explained that she pulls objectives from the IEPs and makes accommodations as needed. It was explained that the students do project based learning, thematic, and exploratory projects. Students take back projects to their home schools and sometimes share them or even teach the projects to the rest of their class. For the underachieving student, the teacher works individually with the student and tries a variety of strategies for motivation.

The district staff person for the gifted program stated that there is not a high school program, because the “students chose not to leave the school to attend the pull out.” These high school students are dismissed and are served through honors, advanced placement, or dual enrollment. One teacher reported that while she feels the program and the teachers are fairly self supporting, they are well supported by the district. Parent support is also high, and parents often come to the Center to volunteer to go on field trips and work on projects.

In summary, the Columbia County School District provides serves to students identified as gifted at the Chrysalis Learning Center (Center). This facility, housing classrooms and a computer lab, is staffed by two teachers and one paraprofessional. Students from grades 2-8 are bused to the Center from the elementary and middle schools and are assigned to the gifted classrooms one day a week.

### **Record Reviews**

A total of 28 student records, randomly selected from the population of exceptional students in Columbia County, were reviewed for compliance. The records were sent to the DOE for review by Bureau staff prior to the on-site visit. The review included 26 IEPs for students with disabilities, including a sample of IEPs for students eligible as speech impaired, and eligible for low-incidence disabilities, and two IEPs for students identified as gifted.

Of the 26 IEPs reviewed for students with disabilities, 24 require reconvening of the IEP teams due to a lack of a majority of measurable annual goals. There were two instances of noncompliance that require fund adjustments resulting from a lack of parent notice of change of placement. Systemic findings are those that occur at a sufficient enough frequency that the monitoring team could reasonably infer a system-wide problem. The following areas of noncompliance appear to be systemic in nature:

- lack of attendance by the general education teacher, no documentation indicating any input from the general education teacher
- present level statements did not address the effects of the students' progress in the general curriculum
- lack of measurable annual goals
- lack of correspondence between the present level of performance, annual goals, and short-term objectives
- lack of appropriate description of special education services
- lack of appropriate location for services
- lack of initiation and duration dates, frequency, and location of accommodations and/or modifications
- present level, annual goals, short-term objectives did not support the services on the IEP
- lack of statement of progress toward the annual goals
- lack of documentation of student performance on state or district assessment

In addition, the following represent items of individual or non-systemic findings:

- no evidence of agency involvement
- lack of individualized short-term objectives
- lack of supplementary aids and services
- lack of attendance of student at the transition meeting
- lack of a description of the student's strength and weakness
- no indication of why a student was exempted from the state assessment

During the on-site review of records of students who have a matrix rating of 254 or 255, five records were found to have errors. Two records were found to contain clerical errors, and three records were lacking sufficient documentation to support the rating.

Additional information regarding these findings, including identification of the specific student records that required reconvening of the IEP teams, has been provided to the district under separate cover.

### **District Forms Review**

Forms representing the thirteen areas identified below were submitted to Bureau staff for a review to determine compliance with federal and state laws. Findings were noted in 10 of the areas, and changes are required on those forms. The district was notified of the specific findings via a separate letter dated June 10, 2003. A detailed explanation of the specific findings may be found in the notification letter, see appendix F.

- *Parent Notification of Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting*
- *IEP form*
- *Notice and Consent for Initial Placement\**
- *Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation\**
- *Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation\**

- *Notification of Change of Placement\**
- *Notification of Change of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)\**
- *Informed Notice of Refusal\**
- *Informed Notice of Dismissal\**
- *Informed Notice of Ineligibility\**
- *Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination\**
- *Summary of Procedural Safeguards*
- *Annual Notice of Confidentiality\**

\* indicates findings that require immediate attention

## **District Response**

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

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

## Columbia County School District Focused Monitoring System Improvement Strategies

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

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
General Information	Data input errors may have led to the district being selected for focused monitoring.	X		Provide training for MIS data entry staff prior to February, 2004.	A random annual check of student information for 15 students on the MIS system by ESE district staff will show 100% correlation with student records.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Access	Varying exceptionalities classes in the block schedule at Richardson Middle School may provide limited opportunities for students with disabilities to access the regular curriculum standards.	X		Restructure service delivery model during the 2003-04 school year to eliminate block schedule and provide instruction according to individual student performance levels. Provide access to the general education curriculum on a daily basis.	District staff semi-annually will conduct a review of student schedules. A random check of 20 folders will show 100% of the students monitored had access to the general curriculum.
Decision-Making	ESE students are often placed in restrictive settings at Fort White High School, preventing them from gaining access to the general curriculum and a standard diploma.	X		The district will provide a Diploma Option Access meeting to all parents and students in January, 2004. Provide teacher training regarding options. The district IEP form has been revised to include additional information to parents and students regarding diploma options.	Columbia County will increase the number of ESE students graduating with a standard diploma by 10% during the 2003-04 school year.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Gifted Services	There are no services for gifted students at the high school level.	X		Annual EP review will be held in conjunction with the development of graduation plan for eighth graders to document services at the secondary level. A parent meeting for students who are gifted will be held prior to February, 2004 to discuss district services at the secondary level.	The district will develop a matrix of services for gifted students at the secondary level by the end of the 2003-04 school year. A random check of 10 secondary students identified as gifted will reveal they are receiving services at the secondary level, as determined by their EP during the 2004-05 school year.
Record Reviews	The review of IEPs resulted in the following findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fund adjustments will be required for two IEPs that lack informed notice of change of placement.</li> </ul>	X		District forms have been modified and district staff trained in the use of <i>notice of change of placement</i> forms. An updated checklist for self-monitoring for compliance will be provided to the staffing committee.	Forms will be sent to DOE for review. An annual district staff review of 20 records will reveal compliance at 100% for required components.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="443 358 879 500">• IEPs for 24 students with disabilities are required to be reconvened due to lack of a majority of measurable goals.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="443 797 879 862">Five matrices had clerical errors and lack of documentation.</p>	X		<p data-bbox="1098 358 1562 570">A district wide training will be held in September to address present levels of performance and annual goals, matrix training update, and a review of the IEP components for all ESE teachers in the district.</p> <p data-bbox="1098 578 1562 675">A second matrix and IEP training for new and second year staff will be held in January, 2004.</p> <p data-bbox="1098 683 1562 748">The identified IEP;s will be reconvened prior to October, 2004.</p>	<p data-bbox="1591 358 1898 748">Copies of the reconvened IEP's will be forwarded to DOE for review. A random district staff monitoring of 20 IEP's annually will reveal 100% compliance for appropriate present levels and measurable annual goals.</p>
		X		<p data-bbox="1098 797 1562 967">A district wide training will be held in September to address present levels of performance and annual goals, matrix training update, and a review of the IEP for all teachers.</p> <p data-bbox="1098 976 1562 1073">The new computerized IEP's have been programmed to automatically calculate matrix totals.</p> <p data-bbox="1098 1081 1562 1227">Additionally, the computerized IEP program will cross reference key terms before allowing matrix levels to be checked.</p>	<p data-bbox="1591 797 1898 1081">A random district staff monitoring of 20 IEP's annually will reveal that 100% of the matrixes are added correctly and have appropriate supportive documentation.</p> <p data-bbox="1591 1089 1898 1260">The new computerized IEP's have been programmed to automatically calculate matrix totals.</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews (continued)	<p>Findings of noncompliance on IEPs primarily were related to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of attendance by the general education teacher, no documentation indicating any input from the general education teacher</li> <li>• present level statements did not address the effects of the students' progress in the general curriculum</li> <li>• lack of measurable annual goals</li> <li>• lack of correspondence between the present level, annual goals, and short-term objectives</li> <li>• lack of appropriate description of special education services</li> <li>• lack of appropriate location for services</li> </ul>	X		<p>A general education teacher will be invited to every IEP meeting.</p> <p>District wide training will be held in September to address present levels of performance and annual goals, matrix training update, and a review of the IEP for all teachers.</p> <p>Appropriate support documentation required for the matrix levels and the district process for notice to parents of progress to annual goals was reviewed.</p> <p>A second matrix and IEP training for new staff will be held in January, 2004.</p> <p>Additionally, a Quality IEP session will be scheduled during the annual ESE summer training institute.</p> <p>The identified IEP's will be reconvened prior to the end of October, 2004, following teacher training to insure quality components.</p>	<p>A district staff semi-annual random monitoring of 20 IEP's will reveal 100% contained documentation of input from the general education teacher at IEP meetings.</p> <p>A random district staff monitoring of 20 IEP's annually will reveal 100% compliance for the following quality indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• correspondence between the present level, annual goals, and short-term objectives</li> <li>• appropriate description of special education services</li> <li>• appropriate location for services</li> <li>• initiation and duration dates, frequency, and location of accommodations and/or modification</li> <li>• present level, annual goals, short-term objectives did not support the services on the IEP</li> </ul>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of initiation and duration dates, frequency, and location of accommodations and /or modification</li> <li>• present level, annual goals, short-term objectives did not support the services on the IEP</li> <li>• lack of statement of progress toward the annual goals</li> <li>• lack of documentation of student performance on state or district assessment</li> </ul>	X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement of progress toward the annual goals</li> <li>• Documentation of student performance on state or district assessment</li> </ul> <p>The new computerized IEP's have been programmed to automatically calculate matrix totals and cross reference key terms prior to accepting matrix levels.</p>
Forms Reviews	<p>Forms used to document the following activities must be revised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</li> <li>• Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation</li> <li>• Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Change of Placement</li> </ul>	X		All forms have been updated and revised in 8/03	Updated forms will be forwarded to DOE by fed-ex mail by September 22, 2004, for review.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Forms Reviews (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed Notice of Change in FAPE (free appropriate public education)</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Refusal</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Dismissal</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Ineligibility</li> <li>• Documentation of Staffing Eligibility Determination</li> <li>• Notice of Confidentiality of Student Records</li> </ul>				



## **Recommendations and Technical Assistance**

As a result of the focused monitoring activities conducted in Columbia County during the week of April 14, 2003, the Bureau has identified specific findings related to the rate of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma. The following are recommendations for the district to consider when developing the system improvement plan and determining strategies that are most likely to effect change. The list is not all-inclusive, and is intended only as a starting point for discussion among the parties responsible for the development of the plan. A partial listing of technical assistance resources is also provided. These resources may be of assistance in the development and/or implementation of the system improvement plan.

### **Recommendations**

- Request a data quality review from Education Information and Accountability Services to check accuracy of data.
- Conduct a review of IEPs and matrices for students with reported matrix ratings of 254-255.
- Provide update training to the appropriate staff involved in matrix completion.
- Consider conducting a school-level needs assessment with regular education teachers to develop training for working with students with disabilities in the regular class.
- Consider training staff and parents on decision-making strategies regarding diploma options
- Consider IEP training for teachers

### **Technical Assistance**

#### **Florida Inclusion Network**

(850) 414-6773

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

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

#### **Career Development and Transition/Project Connect**

Drew Andrews/Joyce Lubbers

(352) 392-0701 ext. 267/285

Website: <http://www.thetransitioncenter.org>

The Career Development and Transition Project helps school districts provide specialized instruction and services to students with disabilities that will assist them in achieving a more successful transition from school to adult and community living.

**Student Support Services Project**

(850) 922-3727

Website: <http://sss.usf.edu>

The project is responsible for providing technical assistance, training and resources to Florida school districts and state agencies in matters related to student support (school psychology, social work, nursing, counseling, and school-to-work).

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

**Clearinghouse Information Center**

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

**Dropout Prevention and Academic Intervention**

Mary Jo Butler

(850) 245-0479

**Gifted**

Donnajo Smith

(850) 245-0478

**Graduation, FCAT**

Michele Polland

(850) 245-0478

**IEPs, SLD**

Paul Gallaher

(850) 245-0478

**Parent Services**

Kelly Claude

(850) 245-0478

**Transition**

Janet Adams

(850) 245-0478

**APPENDIX A:**

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE MONITORING PROCESS**



## **Development of the Monitoring Process 1999-2003**

With guidance from a work group of parent, school and district representatives and members of the State Advisory Committee for Exceptional Students, substantial revisions to Bureau monitoring practices were initiated during the 1999-2000 school year. The shift to a focused monitoring approach began at the national level, with the monitoring of state departments of education by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The revisions reflect a change in the focus of the monitoring process from one that relies primarily on procedural compliance to one that focuses on improved outcomes for students with disabilities, as measured by key data indicators. As a result of the efforts of the monitoring stakeholders' workgroup, three types of monitoring processes were established as part of the Florida DOE's system of exceptional student education monitoring and oversight. Those monitoring activities were identified as focused monitoring, random monitoring, and continuous improvement monitoring.

Beginning in 1999, Bureau staff and the stakeholders' workgroup developed a system whereby districts would be selected for monitoring based on their performance on key data indicators related to student performance, and the monitoring activities would focus on determining the root cause of the district's performance on that indicator. The following key data indicators were recommended by the monitoring restructuring work group and were adopted for implementation by the Bureau. The identified indicators and the sources of the data used are

- percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their non-disabled peers) [Data source: Survey 9]
- dropout rate for students with disabilities [Data source: Survey 5]
- percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma [Data source: Survey 5]
- participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities [Data sources: performance data from the assessment files and Survey 3 enrollment data]

While districts were selected for focused monitoring based on their performance on key data indicators, they were randomly selected for the more procedural/ compliance-oriented random monitoring process. All 67 districts participate in the continuous improvement monitoring process. The focused monitoring activities applied only to students with disabilities, while random monitoring and continuous improvement monitoring involved both students with disabilities and students identified as gifted.

The change to the monitoring process also resulted in an adjustment to what is considered a "monitoring year." Historically, compliance monitoring activities in the state have been conducted in a cycle, and over the course of a school year. While the collection and analysis of data and implementation of system improvement plans for the continuous improvement monitoring process continue to be based on the traditional school year (e.g. 2002-03), the quality assurance visits conducted by the Bureau are conducted over the course of a calendar year (e.g., January to December, 2003).

During the transition year of 1999-2000 districts were asked to conduct extensive self-evaluations. Beginning in the 2000-01 school year, the focused monitoring process was instituted. Four districts were selected for focused monitoring during the 2001 pilot year: Jackson County– standard diploma rate; Lee County– dropout rate; Osceola County– participation in statewide assessment; and, Taylor County– regular class placement.

During the 2002 monitoring cycle, seven districts were chosen for focused monitoring visits based on their state rankings, and three districts were selected at random for the more procedural/compliance-oriented random monitoring. The districts and the indicators they were selected on are as follows: Polk and Gadsden Counties – dropout rate; Madison and Franklin Counties – participation in statewide assessment; and, Dade and Lafayette Counties – regular class placement. Bradford County was selected on the basis of standard diploma rate, but that visit was changed to a random monitoring visit when it was determined that data reporting errors had resulted in a significant misrepresentation of the district’s ranking. Charlotte, Glades, and Duval Counties also were selected for random monitoring.

The continuous improvement monitoring process began during the 2001-02 school year. At that time, school districts were asked to examine key data indicators for exceptional students and to self-select two indicators (one for students with disabilities and one for gifted students) to target for improvement. In the fall of 2001, districts were required to develop a plan to conduct an in-depth analysis during the 2001-02 school year of the selected data indicators for both populations, and to submit the plan to the Bureau for review and approval. While all districts were required to submit a plan for data collection during the initial year of continuous improvement monitoring, on-site visits by the Bureau were not conducted to review these activities.

For the 2002-2003 school year, based on the results of the data collection and analysis conducted during the 2001-02 school year, districts were required to submit continuous improvement monitoring plans (CIMPs) designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and for gifted students.

In an effort to utilize resources most effectively, activities related to random monitoring and continuous improvement monitoring visits have been consolidated. Therefore, during 2003 the Bureau is conducting on-site visits to eight districts chosen for focused monitoring based on key data indicators, and to two districts chosen at random for a review of the continuous improvement monitoring activities undertaken by the district. In addition, the Bureau will conduct follow-up visits to the four districts that participated in the focused monitoring process during 2001. Compliance reviews of selected policies, procedures, and student records are incorporated in varying degrees into all of the monitoring visits.

**APPENDIX B:**  
**DISTRICT DATA**





**Florida Department of Education**  
**Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services**  
**2003 LEA Profile**

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District: <b>Columbia</b>	PK-12 Population: <b>9,701</b>
Enrollment Group: <b>7,000 to 20,000</b>	Percent Disabled: <b>18%</b>
	Percent Gifted: <b>&lt;1%</b>

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## Introduction

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

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

- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) participation and performance
- Standard diploma rate
- Dropout rate
- Retention rate

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

- Regular class / natural environment placement
- Separate class placement
- Discipline rates

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

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

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

## Data Sources

The data contained in this profile were obtained from data submitted electronically by districts through the Department of Education Information Database in surveys 2, 9, 3 and 5 and from the assessment files. School year data are included for **1999-00** through **December 2002**.

## Section One: Educational Benefit

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

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) participation and performance data found in this section includes students who were reported in February (survey 3) **and** had a reported score on the multiple choice portion of the FCAT for the 1999-00, 2000-01, and 2001-02 administrations. (Scores are not reported in cases where the student identification number is missing, incorrect or where the student did not attempt to answer the test questions.) Students who had a reported FCAT score but were not reported in February (survey 3) are not included. Data for students with disabilities and students who are gifted includes only students with a primary exceptionality reported in February (survey 3). Students who had a reported FCAT score but did not have a primary exceptionality in February are not included in the disabled or gifted data. The statewide student match rate for students with disabilities and students identified as gifted in February (survey 3) and the FCAT files was between 98 and 99 percent across the reported grade levels.

### Participation Rate in Statewide Assessments:

The number of students with disabilities reported in February (survey 3) who had a reported FCAT score divided by the total number enrolled during February (survey 3) of the same year. The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **1999-00** through **2001-02**.

<b>Grade 3 Participation FCAT Math</b>					<b>Grade 3 Participation FCAT Reading</b>
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
*	80%	86%	*	80%	86%
*	87%	87%	*	86%	87%
*	85%	87%	*	85%	87%
Columbia Enrollment Group			State		
<b>Grade 5 Participation FCAT Math</b>					<b>Grade 4 Participation FCAT Reading</b>
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
71%	75%	91%	75%	80%	88%
84%	87%	87%	82%	86%	87%
84%	85%	88%	83%	85%	88%
Columbia Enrollment Group			State		
<b>Grade 8 Participation FCAT Math</b>					<b>Grade 8 Participation FCAT Reading</b>
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
78%	75%	77%	78%	74%	77%
80%	79%	81%	80%	79%	81%
76%	76%	80%	76%	76%	80%
Columbia Enrollment Group			State		
<b>Grade 10 Participation FCAT Math</b>					<b>Grade 10 Participation FCAT Reading</b>
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
41%	64%	65%	40%	66%	65%
64%	60%	64%	63%	60%	65%
58%	59%	62%	58%	59%	62%
Columbia Enrollment Group			State		

\* Not administered in 1999-00.

\*\* Reported number participating exceeds enrollment.

## Performance on Statewide Assessments: FCAT Reading

The following tables show the percent of students in the district scoring at Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 and above on the **2000-01** and **2001-02** FCAT for students with disabilities, all students, and gifted students. The bars in the graph display the percent of students in the district scoring at or above achievement level 3 for **2000-01** and **2001-02**.

	Grade 3 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	nr	58%	nr	11%	nr	31%
all students	nr	22%	nr	14%	nr	64%
gifted students	nr	0%	nr	0%	nr	100%

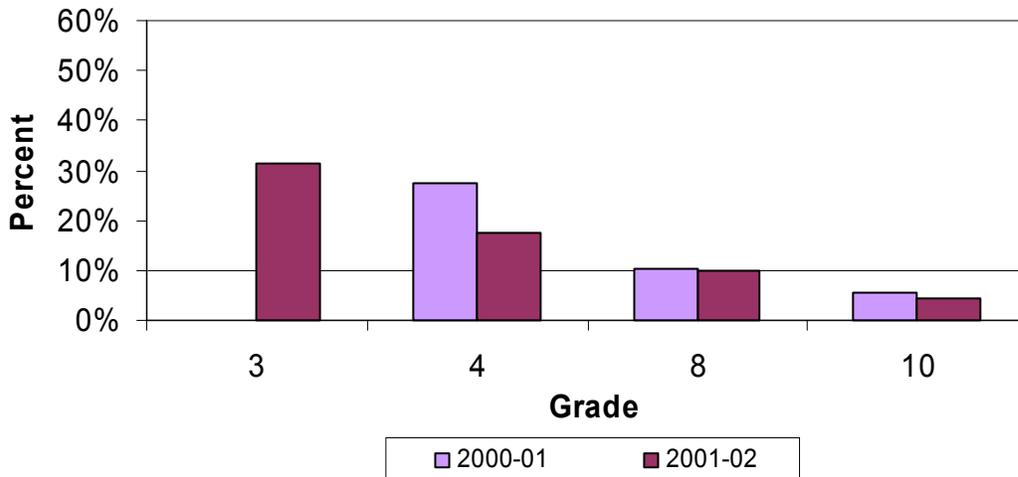
	Grade 4 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	65%	74%	8%	8%	27%	18%
all students	28%	28%	17%	14%	55%	57%
gifted students	0%	0%	0%	5%	100%	95%

	Grade 8 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	79%	74%	10%	16%	10%	10%
all students	30%	28%	30%	28%	40%	44%
gifted students	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%

	Grade 10 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	83%	74%	11%	21%	6%	4%
all students	34%	28%	34%	37%	32%	35%
gifted students	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

nr = not reported

### Percent of Students with Disabilities at Achievement Level 3 or Higher FCAT Reading



# Performance on Statewide Assessments: FCAT Math

Grade 3 Achievement Level						
Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+		
2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	
students with disabilities	nr	48%	nr	22%	nr	30%
all students	nr	20%	nr	23%	nr	57%
gifted students	nr	0%	nr	0%	nr	100%

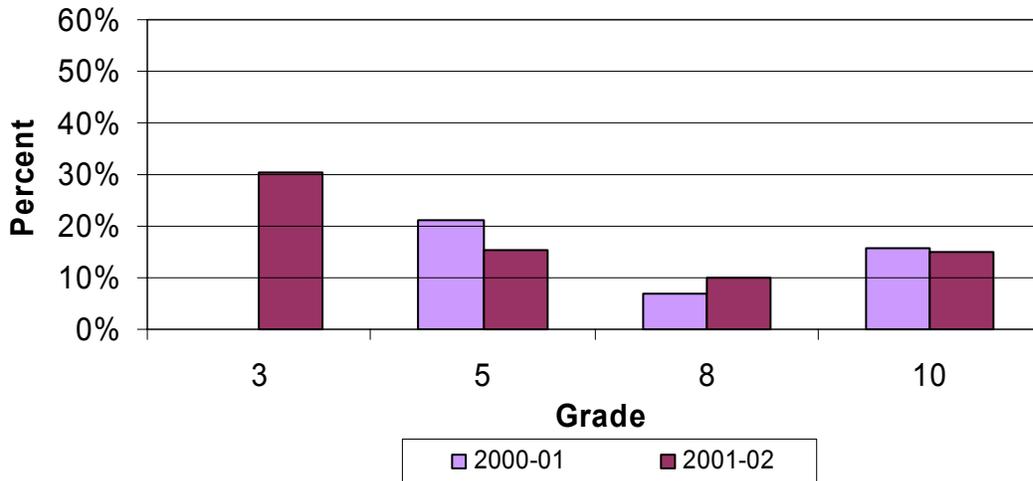
Grade 5 Achievement Level						
Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+		
2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	
students with disabilities	63%	64%	16%	21%	21%	15%
all students	27%	26%	28%	31%	46%	43%
gifted students	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%

Grade 8 Achievement Level						
Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+		
2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	
students with disabilities	75%	67%	18%	23%	7%	10%
all students	25%	27%	27%	26%	49%	47%
gifted students	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%

Grade 10 Achievement Level						
Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+		
2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	
students with disabilities	65%	70%	20%	15%	16%	15%
all students	22%	18%	25%	23%	53%	60%
gifted students	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

nr = not reported

## Percent of Students with Disabilities at Achievement Level 3 or Higher FCAT Math



### Standard Diploma Graduation Rate:

The number of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma (withdrawal code W06) divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education (withdrawal codes W06-10, W27) as reported in end of year survey 5. The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **1999-00** through **2001-02**.

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Columbia	71%	28%	30%
Enrollment Group	57%	50%	52%
State	56%	51%	48%

### Retention Rate:

The number of students retained divided by the total year enrollment as reported in end of year survey 5. Total enrollment is the count of all students who attended school at any time during the school year. The results are reported for students with disabilities and all PK-12 students for **2001-02**.

		2001-02	
		Students with Disabilities	All Students
Columbia		8%	7%
Enrollment Group		5%	4%
State		7%	6%

### Dropout Rate:

The number of students grades 9-12 for whom a dropout withdrawal reason (DNE, W05, W11, W13-W23) was reported, divided by the total enrollment of grade 9-12 students and students who did not enter school as expected (DNEs) as reported in end of year survey 5. The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities, all PK-12 students, and gifted students for the years **1999-00** through **2001-02**.

		Students with Disabilities		
		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Columbia		1%	2%	3%
Enrollment Group		5%	5%	5%
State		6%	5%	5%

		All Students		
		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Columbia		2%	2%	1%
Enrollment Group		3%	3%	3%
State		5%	4%	3%

		Gifted Students		
		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Columbia		0%	0%	0%
Enrollment Group		<1%	<1%	<1%
State		<1%	<1%	<1%

## Section Two: Educational Environment

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

### Regular Class Placement, Ages 6-21:

The number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 who spend 80 percent or more of their school week with nondisabled peers divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Columbia	46%	46%	46%
Enrollment Group	44%	45%	46%
State	48%	48%	48%

### Natural Environments, Ages 3-5:

The number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 who receive all of their special education and related services in educational programs designed primarily for children without disabilities or in their home divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Columbia	3%	1%	2%
Enrollment Group	5%	5%	5%
State	6%	7%	7%

### Separate Class Placement of EMH Students, Ages 6-21:

The number of students ages 6-21 identified as educable mentally handicapped who spend less than 40 percent of their day with nondisabled peers divided by the total number of EMH students reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for three years from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Columbia	50%	48%	57%
Enrollment Group	56%	58%	60%
State	61%	62%	61%

### Discipline Rates:

The number of students who served in-school or out-of-school suspensions, were expelled, or moved to alternative placement at any time during the school year divided by the total year enrollment as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities and nondisabled students for **2001-02**.

		2001-02							
		In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions		Alternative Placement *	
		Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students						
Columbia		19%	16%	15%	7%	<1%	<1%	0%	0%
Enrollment Group		15%	10%	14%	7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
State		13%	8%	15%	7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

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

## Section Three: Prevalence

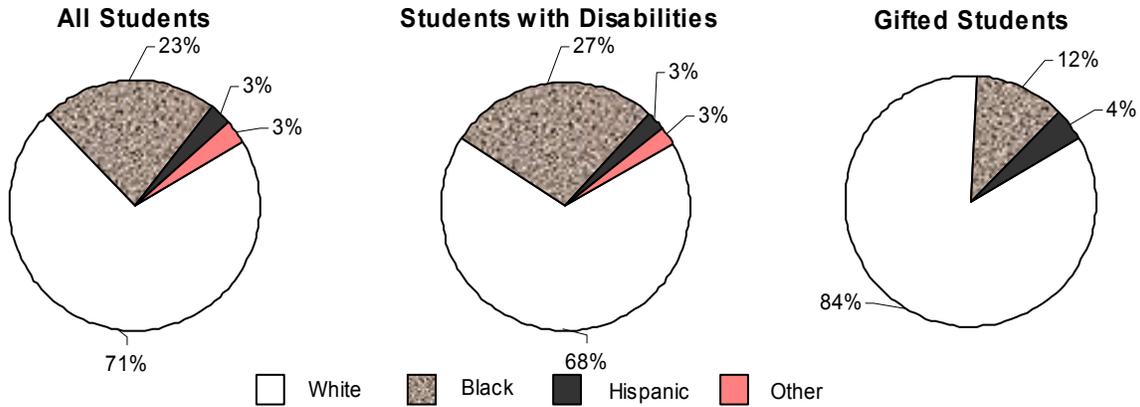
Prevalence refers to the proportion of the PK-12 population identified as exceptional at any given point in time. This section of the profile provides prevalence data by demographic characteristics.

### Student Membership by Racial/Ethnic Category:

The three columns on the left show the statewide racial/ethnic distribution for all PK-12 students, all students with disabilities, and all gifted students as reported in **October 2002** (survey 2). Statewide, there is a larger percentage of black students in the disabled population than in the total PK-12 population (28 percent vs. 24 percent) and a smaller percentage of black students in the gifted population (10 percent vs. 24 percent). Similar data for the district are reported in the three right hand columns and displayed in the graphs.

	State			District		
	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Gifted Students	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Gifted Students
White	51%	52%	64%	71%	68%	84%
Black	24%	28%	10%	23%	27%	12%
Hispanic	21%	17%	19%	3%	3%	4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	<1%	4%	<1%	<1%	0%
Am Ind/Alaskan Nat	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%
Multiracial	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	0%

### District Membership by Race/Ethnicity



### Free/Reduced Lunch and LEP:

The percent of all students and all gifted students in the district and the state on free/reduced lunch. The percent of all students and all gifted students in the district and in the state who are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). These percentages are based on data reported in **October 2002** (survey 2).

	State		District	
	All Students	Gifted Students	All Students	Gifted Students
Free / Reduced Lunch	44%	20%	54%	21%
LEP	12%	3%	<1%	0%

**Selected Disabilities by Racial/Ethnic Category:**

Racial/ethnic data for all students as well as students with a primary disability of specific learning disabled (SLD), emotionally handicapped or severely emotionally disturbed (EH/SED), and educable mentally handicapped (EMH) are presented below. The data are presented for the state and the district as reported in **October 2002** (survey 2).

	All Students		SLD		EH/SED		EMH	
	State	District	State	District	State	District	State	District
White	51%	71%	54%	72%	48%	69%	33%	50%
Black	24%	23%	24%	23%	39%	26%	53%	48%
Hispanic	21%	3%	20%	2%	11%	3%	13%	<1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	<1%	0%
Am Ind/Alaskan Nat	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%
Multiracial	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	<1%	1%

**Selected Disabilities as Percent of Disabled and PK-12 Populations:**

The percentage of the total disabled population and the total population identified as SLD, EH or SED, EMH, and speech impaired (SI) for the district and for the state. Statewide, seven percent of the total population is identified as SLD and 46 percent of all students with disabilities are SLD. The data are presented for the district and state as reported in **October 2002** (survey 2).

	All Students		All Disabled	
	State	District	State	District
SLD	7%	6%	46%	31%
EH/SED	1%	2%	10%	12%
EMH	1%	3%	8%	15%
SI	2%	3%	14%	19%

**Districts in Columbia's Enrollment Group:**

Charlotte, Citrus, Columbia, Flagler, Gadsden, Hendry, Hernando, Highlands, Indian River, Jackson, Martin, Monroe, Nassau, Okeechobee, Putnam



The New Department of  
**Education**

**Jim Horne, Commissioner**

**Columbia County School District  
 Focused Monitoring Visit  
 April 14-16, 2003**

**Districts Rank-Ordered on Standard Diploma Rate for Students with Disabilities**

District	# Complete	# St. Dip.	%	Rank
Hendry	44	10	23%	1
Columbia	60	18	30%	2
Jackson	61	19	31%	3
Suwannee	29	10	34%	4
Polk	575	208	36%	5
Duval	558	203	36%	6
Hardee	19	7	37%	7
Lee	249	93	37%	8
Union	8	3	38%	9
Putnam	114	43	38%	10
Madison	47	18	38%	11
Marion	287	115	40%	12
Orange	871	354	41%	13
Bradford	57	24	42%	14
Okeechobee	63	27	43%	15
Levy	50	22	44%	16
Sumter	54	24	44%	17
Taylor	29	13	45%	18
Osceola	230	104	45%	19
Holmes	21	10	48%	20
Bay	148	72	49%	21
Gilchrist	31	16	52%	22
Wakulla	50	26	52%	23
Martin	98	51	52%	24
Palm Beach	786	411	52%	25
Miami Dade	1,469	777	53%	26
Walton	34	18	53%	27
DeSoto	30	16	53%	28
Escambia	348	188	54%	29
Washington	22	12	55%	30
Pinellas	685	375	55%	31
Highlands	160	88	55%	32
Alachua	124	70	56%	33
Manatee	352	199	57%	34

		12	57%	35
	12	7	58%	36
	587	350	60%	37
	280	167	60%	38
	10	6	60%	39
	10	6	60%	40
	53	32	60%	41
	244	150	61%	42
	13	8	62%	43
	68	43	63%	44
	540	342	63%	45
	276	180	65%	46
	26	17	65%	47
	1,023	674	66%	48
	6	4	67%	49
	182	123	68%	50
	31	21	68%	51
	317	218	69%	52
	117	84	72%	53
	115	84	73%	54
	1,270	928	73%	55
	146	108	74%	56
	236	175	74%	57
	8	6	75%	58
	514	389	76%	59
	284	218	77%	60
	160	125	78%	61
	19	15	79%	62
	461	369	80%	63
	174	140	80%	64
	724	603	83%	65
	52	49	94%	66
	74	73	99%	67



**APPENDIX C:**  
**MONITORING TEAM MEMBERS**



**Columbia County School District  
Focused Monitoring Visit  
April 14-16, 2003**

**Monitoring Team Members**

**Department of Education Staff**

Shan Goff, Chief, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services  
Eileen Amy, Administrator, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Carol Kirkpatrick, Program Director, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Iris Anderson, Program Specialist  
Lee Clark, Program Specialist  
Paul Gallaher, Program Specialist  
Kim Komisar, Program Specialist

**Peer Reviewers**

Mary Camp  
Nancy Pope  
Cara Sipel

**Contracted Staff**

Maria Elena Arguelles, University of Miami  
Christopher Sarno, University of Miami  
James Kohnstamm, University of Miami  
Hope Nieman, Consultant



**APPENDIX D:**  
**SURVEY RESULTS**



**2003 Parent Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities  
Columbia County**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of parents and families of students with disabilities in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a parent survey as part of the Bureau’s district monitoring activities.

In conjunction with the 2003 Columbia County monitoring activities, the Parent Survey was sent to parents of the 1763 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 211 parents (PK, n = 23; K-5, n = 93; 6-8, n = 50; 9-12, n = 45) representing 12% of the sample, returned the survey. 146 surveys were returned as undeliverable, representing 8% of the sample.

Parents responded “yes” or “no” to each survey item, indicating that they either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents who agreed with the item.

**Parent Survey Results**

	<b>% Yes</b>
<b>Overall, I am satisfied with:</b>	
• the way I am treated by school personnel.	85
• the level of knowledge and experience of school personnel.	72
• how quickly services are implemented following an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) decision.	72
• the way special education teachers and regular education teachers work together.	71
• the amount of time my child spends with regular education students.	68
• the exceptional education services my child receives.	65
• the effect of exceptional student education on my child’s self-esteem.	65
• my child’s academic progress.	64
<b>My child:</b>	
• has friends at school.	91
• is usually happy at school.	81
• spends most of the school day involved in productive activities.	78
• is learning skills that will be useful later on in life.	77
• is aiming for a standard diploma.	75

\*These questions answered by parents of students grade 8 and above

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

- which diploma my child may receive.\* 66
- ways that my child could spend time with students in regular classes. 54
- whether my child should get accommodations (special testing conditions), for example, extra time. 54
- whether my child would take the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) 53
- the requirements for different diplomas.\* 53
- whether my child needed services beyond the regular school year. 52

**My child's teachers:**

- are available to speak with me. 92
- expect my child to succeed. 89
- set appropriate goals for my child. 84
- call me or send notes about my child. 75
- give homework that meets my child's needs 64
- give students with disabilities extra time or different assignments, if needed 64

**My child's school:**

- encourages me to participate in my child's education. 80
- makes sure I understand my child's IEP. 79
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 78
- encourages acceptance of students with disabilities. 77
- offers students with disabilities the classes they need to graduate with a standard diploma 71
- addresses my child's individual needs 71
- does all it can to keep students from dropping out of school. 70
- wants to hear my ideas. 69
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 65
- involves students with disabilities in clubs, sports, or other activities. 65
- provides students with disabilities updated books and materials. 64
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's IEP. 63
- offers a variety of vocational courses, such as computers and business technology.\* 62
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 59
- provides information to students about education and jobs after high school.\* 47

\*These questions answered by parents of students grade 8 and above

**% Yes**

**Parent Participation:**

• I have attended one or more meetings about my child during this school year.	90
• I am comfortable talking about my child with school staff.	88
• I participated in school activities with my child.	68
• I am a member of the PTA/PTO.	21
• I have used parent support services in my area.	18
• I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement.	16
• I belong to an organization for parents of students with disabilities	15

\*These questions answered by parents of students grade 8 and above

**2003 Parent Survey Report  
Students Identified as Gifted  
Columbia County**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of parents and families of students identified as gifted in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a parent survey in conjunction with the Bureau’s district monitoring activities.

The Parent Survey was sent to parents of the 100 students identified as gifted for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 28 parents (KG-5, n = 19, 6-8, n = 9; 9 - 12, n = 0) representing 28% of the sample, returned the survey. Four surveys were returned as undeliverable, representing less than 4% of the sample.

Parents responded “yes” or “no” to each survey item, indicating that they either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents who agreed with the item.

**Parent Survey Results**

**% Yes**

**Overall, I am satisfied with:**

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| • gifted teachers’ subject area knowledge.   | 100 |
| • the gifted services my child receives.   | 96  |
| • my child’s academic progress.  | 96  |
| • gifted teachers’ expertise in teaching students identified as gifted.              | 96  |
| • the effect of gifted services on my child’s self-esteem.                           | 93  |
| • regular teachers’ subject area knowledge.  | 93  |
| • how quickly services were implemented following an initial request for evaluation. | 78  |
| • regular teachers’ expertise in teaching students identified as gifted.             | 74  |

**In Regular Classes, my child:**

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| • has friends at school.                                   | 96 |
| • is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. | 93 |
| • is usually happy at school.                              | 89 |
| • has his/her social and emotional needs met at school.    | 89 |
| • has creative outlets at school.                          | 68 |
| • is academically challenged at school.                    | 59 |

	<b>Yes %</b>
<b>In Gifted Classes, my child:</b>	
• has friends at school	100
• is academically challenged at school.	100
• has creative outlets at school.	100
• is learning skills that will be useful later on in life.	100
• is usually happy at school.	93
• has his/her social and emotional needs met at school.	93
<b>My child's regular teachers:</b>	
• expect appropriate behavior.	100
• provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups.	95
• are available to speak with me.	85
• have access to the latest information and technology.	73
• call me or send me notes about my child.	68
• set appropriate goals for my child.	64
• give homework that meets my child's needs.	64
• relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits.	58
<b>My child's gifted teachers:</b>	
• expect appropriate behavior.	100
• provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups.	100
• set appropriate goals for my child.	96
• are available to speak with me.	96
• call me or send me notes about my child.	92
• give homework that meets my child's needs.	88
• relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits.	88
• have access to the latest information and technology.	88
<b>My child's home school:</b>	
• sends me information written in a way I understand.	96
• treats me with respect.	85
• sends me information about activities and workshops for parents.	81
• encourages me to participate in my child's education.	80
• wants to hear my ideas.	71
• makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP.	61
• informs me about all of the services available to my child.	60
• involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP).	59
• addresses my child's individual needs.	58
• implements my ideas.	48
• provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials.	46
• explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP.	45

**% Yes**

**My child's 2<sup>nd</sup> school:**

- addresses my child's individual needs. 100
- provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials. 100
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 100
- encourages me to participate in my child's education. 96
- treats me with respect. 93
- involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP). 89
- makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP. 88
- wants to hear my ideas. 83
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 81
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 81
- implements my ideas. 75
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP. 72

**Parent Participation**

- I have attended one or more meetings about my child during this school year. 92
- I participate in school activities with my child. 89
- I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement. 50
- I am a member of the PTA/PTO. 42
- I have used parent support services in my area. 15
- I belong to an organization for parents of students identified as gifted. 8

**2003 Teacher Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities  
Columbia County**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of teachers in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a teacher survey in conjunction with the Bureau’s district monitoring activities.

Surveys developed for teachers and other service providers were mailed to each school, with a memo explaining the key data indicator and the monitoring process. All teachers, both general education and ESE, were provided an opportunity to respond. Surveys were returned from 445 teachers (72% of all teachers in the district) from 12 of the 13 schools in Columbia County.

Teachers responded “consistently,” “to some extent,” “minimally,” or “not at all” to each survey item. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents reported that it consistently occurs.

**Teacher Survey Results**

**% Consistently**

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

- places students with disabilities into general education classes whenever possible. 68
- ensures that students with disabilities feel comfortable when taking classes with general education students. 68
- modifies and adapts curriculum for students as needed. 63
- addresses each student's individual needs. 57
- ensures that the general education curriculum is taught in ESE classes to the maximum extent possible. 53
- encourages collaboration among ESE teachers, GE teachers and service providers. 53
- provides adequate support to GE teachers who teach students with disabilities. 42
- offers teachers professional development opportunities regarding curriculum and support for students with disabilities. 41

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

- provides students with appropriate testing accommodations. 81
- provides teachers with FCAT test preparation materials. 77
- aligns curriculum for students with the standards that are tested on the FCAT. 62
- gives students in ESE classes updated textbooks. 57

	%
<b>To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school:</b>	
• develops IEPs according to student needs.	83
• makes an effort to involve parents in their child's education.	77
• conducts ongoing assessments of individual students' performance.	71
• allows students to make up credits lost due to disability-related absences.	67
• encourages participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities.	63
• ensures that classroom material is culturally appropriate.	59
• ensures that classroom material is grade- and age-appropriate.	59
• provides positive behavioral supports.	57
• implements a dropout prevention program.	53
• ensures that students are taught strategies to manage their behavior as needed.	50
• provides social skills training to students as needed.	45

**The following items relate primarily to middle and high schools.**

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

• implements an IEP transition plan for each student.	79
• provides students with information about options after graduation.	61
• teaches transition skills for future employment and independent living.	38
• provides students with job training.	36
• coordinates on-the-job training with outside agencies.	35

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

• informs students through the IEP process of the different diploma options and their requirements.	68
• provides extra help to students who need to retake the FCAT.	67
• encourages students to aim for a standard diploma when appropriate.	62

**2003 Student Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities  
Columbia County**

In order to obtain the perspective of students with disabilities who receive services from public school districts, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracts with the University of Miami to develop and administer a student survey in conjunction with the Bureau's focused monitoring activities. The survey was administered for the first time during the 2002 monitoring year.

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

Eighty-one student surveys, representing 21% of the students with disabilities, were returned from the Columbia County School District. Data are from both of the district's schools with students in grades 9-12. Students responded "yes" or "no" to each survey item, indicating that they either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents who agreed with the item.

**Student Survey Results**

	<b>% Yes</b>
<b>I am taking the following ESE classes:</b>	
• English	47
• Math	41
• Social Studies	31
• Science	32
• Electives (physical education, art, music)	47
• Vocational (woodshop, computers)	28
<b>At my school:</b>	
• ESE teachers believe that ESE students can learn.	86
• ESE teachers teach students things that will be useful later on in life.	83
• ESE teachers give students extra time or different assignments, if needed.	82
• ESE teachers give students extra help, if needed.	81
• ESE teachers understand ESE students' needs.	80
• ESE teachers teach students in ways that help them learn.	78
• ESE teachers provide ESE students with updated books and materials.	63

**% Yes**

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

- Electives (physical education, art, music) 74
- Vocational (woodshop, computers) 51
- Science 50
- English 49
- Social Studies 47
- Math 47

The following section was filled out by students with disabilities who are taking any or all regular/mainstream classes.

**At my school:**

- Regular education teachers believe that ESE students can learn. 89
- Regular education teachers teach ESE students things that will be useful later on in life. 88
- Regular education teachers give ESE students extra help if needed. 78
- Regular education teachers teach ESE students in ways that help them learn. 77
- Regular education teachers give ESE students extra time or different assignments if needed. 77
- Regular education teachers understand ESE students' needs. 73

**At my school, ESE students:**

- are encouraged to stay in school. 84
- participate in clubs, sports, and other activities. 81
- get work experience (on-the-job training) if they are interested. 81
- get the help they need to well in school. 79
- fit in at school. 76
- spend enough time with regular education students. 74
- are treated fairly by teachers and staff. 71
- get information about education after high school. 66
- can take vocational classes such as computers and business technology. 53

**Diploma Option**

- I agree with the type of diploma I am going to receive. 89
- I know what courses I have to take to get my diploma. 87
- I know the difference between a regular and a special diploma. 86
- I had a say in the decision about which diploma I would get. 76
- I will probably graduate with a regular diploma. 52

	<b>% Yes</b>
<b>IEP</b>	
• I had a say in the decision about which classes I would take.	73
• I was invited to attend my IEP meeting this year.	72
• I attended my IEP meeting this year.	59
• I had a say in the decision about special testing conditions I might get for the FCAT or other tests.	42
• I had a say in the decision about whether I need to take the FCAT or a different test.	33
<b>FCAT</b>	
• I took the FCAT this year.	60
• In my English/reading classes, we work on the kinds of skills that are tested on the reading part of the FCAT.	52
• In my math classes, we work on the kinds of problems that are tested on the math part of the FCAT.	51
• I received accommodations (special testing conditions) for the FCAT.	45
• Teachers help ESE students prepare for the FCAT.	37



**APPENDIX E:**  
**FORMS REVIEW**



**Columbia County  
Focused Monitoring Report  
Forms Review**

This forms review was completed as a component of the focused monitoring visit conducted the week of April 14, 2003. The following district forms were compared to the requirements of applicable State Board of Education rules, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and applicable sections of Part 300, Code of Federal Regulations. The review includes required revisions and recommended revisions based on programmatic or procedural issues and concerns. The results of the review are detailed below and list the applicable sources used for the review.

<b>Parent Notification of Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting</b> <i>Form Parent Notification of IEP/IEP Transition Plan Meeting</i> <b>Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.345</b>
--

This form contains the components for compliance.

<b>Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting</b> <i>Form Individual Educational Program/Transition Educational Plan</i> <b>Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.347</b>
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This form contains the components for compliance.

The following comment is made in regard to this form.

- It is noted that there is a place within the section for “Benchmarks or Objectives” where evaluation results for each six week period can be recorded. As this section is a measure of the short-term objectives, and not a measure of the student’s progress toward the annual goals, this section does not meet the requirements for the progress report to be given to the parents.

<b>Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</b> <i>Form Informed Notice of Eligibility and Consent for Educational Placement</i> <b>Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505</b>
---

**The following must be addressed:**

- This form implies that the recommended placement of the student was a result of the staffing committee determination that the student met eligibility for an ESE program. The staffing committee does not determine placement. This form must be revised to indicate that the placement recommendation was determined by an IEP team.
- Federal and state laws require that the parental notice form include sources for a parent to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of the IDEA. This form must be revised to include more than one source.

**Notice of Change in Placement Form**  
*Form School Staffing Committee Report*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

**The following must be addressed:**

- This form submitted for this purpose is the staffing documentation form which does not contain notice requirements. The district will need to develop a form for the purpose of notifying parents of a change in the student's placement.

**Notice of Change in FAPE**  
*Form None*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

**The following must be addressed:**

- The district did not submit a form for this purpose, and will need to develop a form for the purpose of notifying parents of a change FAPE with all the required components. It is suggested that the new form also include the requirements for a change in placement.

**Notice of Ineligibility**  
*Form Eligibility and Assignment Form*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

**The following must be addressed:**

- Federal and state laws require that the parental notice form include sources for a parent to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of the IDEA. This form must be revised to include more than one source.

**Notice of Dismissal**  
*Form Informed Notice of Dismissal*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

**The following must be addressed:**

- This form indicates that a staffing committee determined that a student be dismissed. An IEP team determines dismissal. This form must be revised to indicate that, as a result of reevaluation the IEP team determined that a student should be dismissed.
- Federal and state laws require that the parental notice form include sources for a parent to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of the IDEA. This form must be revised to include more than one source.

**Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation**

**Form** *Informed Notice and Consent for Individual Evaluation*

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

**The following must be addressed:**

- Federal and state laws require that the parental notice form include sources for a parent to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of the IDEA. This form must be revised to include more than one source.

**Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation**

**Form** *Informed Parental Consent for Reevaluation*

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

**The following must be addressed:**

- Federal and state laws require that the parental notice form include sources for a parent to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of the IDEA. This form must be revised to include more than one source.

**Informed Notice of Refusal**

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

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

**The following must be addressed:**

- The district did not submit a form for this purpose, and will need to develop a form for notice of refusal with all the required components.

**Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination**

**Form** *Eligibility Determination and Staffing Form*

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

**The following must be addressed:**

- Under the section entitled “Reason for Staffing” this form lists dismissal and reevaluation. Dismissal and reevaluation are the procedures determined by the IEP team. This form must be revised to clearly show that dismissal and reevaluation determinations are made by the IEP committee.
- The statement indicating that the ESE administrator “approved” or “disapproved” the staffing committee decision must be revised to indicate that the ESE administrator “reviewed” the recommendation of the staffing committee.

<p><b>Confidentiality of Information</b> <b>Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Part 99 Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503</b></p>
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**The following must be addressed:**

- The notice does not contain the required component that informs parents that they have a “right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the district to comply with the requirements.”

It was noted that the district utilizes the procedural safeguards wording provided by the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services.

**APPENDIX F:**  
**GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**



## **Glossary of Acronyms**

Bureau	Bureau of Instructional Support & Community Services
DOE	Department of Education
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
Pre-K (PK)	Pre-kindergarten
S/L	Speech and Language
SSS	Sunshine State Standards
VE	Varying Exceptionalities