

# Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind

## Final Report: On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs

February 1–3, 2012



Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

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Bureau website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

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

Telephone: (850) 245-0477

Fax: (850) 245-0987

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April 4, 2012

Mr. L. Daniel Hutto, President  
Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB)  
207 San Marco Avenue  
St. Augustine, Florida 32084-2762

Dear Mr. Hutto:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report: On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs* for FSDB. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site monitoring visit to the FSDB schools on February 1–3, 2012. Those information sources included student record reviews; interviews with administrators; teachers, and other service providers at FSDB; classroom observations; and feedback provided by the student focus groups. The final report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

FSDB was selected for a cyclical on-site visit for a review of the implementation and development of individual educational plans (IEPs). Mr. Matthew Campese, Math Instructional Specialist with the Bureau of School Improvement of the Florida Department of Education, participated with staff from the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (Bureau) in conducting this on-site visit.

Ms. debbie Schuler, Administrator of Instructional Services, and Mr. Scott Trejbal, Academic Compliance Coordinator, were very helpful during the Bureau's preparation for the visit and during the on-site visit. In addition, the principals, assistant principals, teachers, and other staff members at each of the schools welcomed and assisted the monitoring team during the on-site visit.

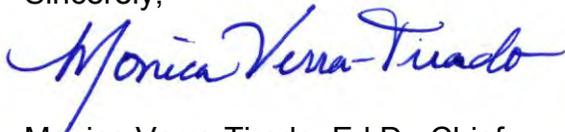
**MONICA VERRA-TIRADO, Ed.D., CHIEF**  
*Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services*

Mr. L. Daniel Hutto  
April 4, 2012  
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The Bureau's on-site monitoring activities identified noncompliance related to IEP development and medical eye examinations for reevaluations, for which corrective actions are required. In addition, strengths, concerns, and recommendations related to FSDB's special education services were identified.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students at FSDB. If there are any questions regarding this final report, please contact Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance, at (850) 245-0476 or via email at [Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org](mailto:Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,



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

Enclosure

cc: debbie Schuler  
Scott Trejbal  
Karen Denbroeder  
Patricia Howell  
Annette Oliver  
Leanne Grillot  
Matthew Campese

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# **Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind**

## **Final Report: On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs February 1–3, 2012**

### **Authority**

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

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

### **Monitoring Process**

#### **Background Information**

In a letter dated September 6, 2011, the President of the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB) was informed that the Bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit related to the ESE programs at FSDB.

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

##### ***Monitoring Team***

On February 1–3, 2012, the following Bureau staff members conducted the on-site monitoring visit:

- Annette Oliver, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance (Team Leader)
- Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance
- Leanne Grillot, Program Specialist, Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing (DHH), Dual-Sensory Impairment (DSI), and Visual Impairment (VI)

During the on-site monitoring visit, the Bureau's team was joined by Matthew Campese, Math Instructional Specialist with the FDOE's Bureau of School Improvement.

### ***FSDB Schools***

- Blind Elementary School
- Blind Middle School
- Blind High School
- Deaf Elementary School
- Deaf Middle School
- Deaf High School

### ***Data Collection***

Monitoring activities at FSDB included the following:

- Administrators interview – 9 participants
- Case Studies – 9 students
  - Record reviews – 9 students
  - Classroom/Instructional Visits – 12 classrooms
  - Teacher interviews – 9 participants
- Student focus groups and interviews – 15 students

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

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

- Current and previous individual educational plans (IEPs)
- Therapy log(s)
- School, teacher, and student schedules
- Lesson plans
- Attendance records
- Student work samples/portfolios
- Progress notes
- Medical eye examination reports (for students identified with visual impairments)

### ***Student Focus Groups***

Fourteen (14) students from the Blind High School and the Deaf High School participated in two student focus groups conducted by FDOE staff. Several of these students were selected from the group of students chosen for case studies. Another student could not participate in the focus group, but requested to be interviewed.

Focus group questions included the following topics:

- IEP team meetings
- Current ESE services, including transition services
- Extracurricular activities
- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and diploma options
- Dropout prevention
- Job training
- Postsecondary education

The students' responses to the questions from the FDOE staff included the following:

- They are aware of the purpose of an IEP team meeting.
- Their input is considered in all areas of the IEP process, including working toward a standard or special diploma.
- The services on their IEPs are being provided, and these services help them to be more successful in school.
- They are strongly encouraged to advocate for themselves and expected to participate in all aspects of their learning.
- They are aware of the FCAT, the Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA) and the ACT college-entrance examination and know the dates when these would be administered.
- They have choices to participate in numerous extracurricular activities.
- FSDB staff are very helpful in preparing them for college and obtaining scholarships.
- They were not familiar with the FCAT waiver.
- Some students would like to have additional assistance in preparing for the FCAT.
- Some students would like the curriculum to include courses such as carpentry and woodworking, and more courses in drama, dance, music production, foreign languages, and health education.

## **Results**

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

### **Commendations**

As part of the on-site activities, the monitoring team had an opportunity to conduct student case studies, observe students during instructional visits, and interview teachers regarding the provision of services provided to students with disabilities in the schools visited. The on-site team identified numerous commendable programs and services across the schools and programs at FSDB, which included:

#### *Administrators and Staff*

- Administrators provide strong leadership and support to the staff and students.
- There are strong collaborative efforts among staff members from the Deaf and the Blind schools.
- There is evidence that the administrators and staff at FSDB are strong role models and advocates for the students.
- The administrators' vision for instructional practices and data-informed decisions are directly in line with research-based practices.
- Interpreters work collaboratively to provide support throughout the campus for students, families, and the community.

#### *Buildings and Grounds*

- The buildings and grounds are attractive, accessible, and well-maintained. This provides a positive atmosphere which is conducive to student learning.

### *Health Care Services*

- The FSDB health care facility is very clean and well equipped. The facility provides nursing and pharmacy services for all students on a 24-hour, five-day-a-week schedule. Clinical services include dental and vision.

### *Parental and Community Involvement*

- FSDB hosts many personal tours for prospective families, parents and students, as well as educational tours for school districts and community members. The Parent Services Department helps support the positive learning environment for all students at FSDB.
- FSDB reported that they have a very high percentage of parents who actively participate in the IEP process.
- Parents and the members of the community have numerous opportunities to participate in activities at FSDB. Many of these activities are communicated through FSDB's website, blogs, school calendar, newsletter, and the FSDB Video Library.

### *Programs and Services*

- The Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program has been implemented across all school settings at FSDB, including academic and non-academic programs. All staff members at the school have been trained. This has been an effective program for reinforcing the safety of the school climate at FSDB.
- FSDB has been awarded the 2012 National Exemplary Bullying Prevention Program Award. Their "Bullying – Informative Links" webpage includes numerous links for information regarding the prevention of bullying for parents, teachers, and students.
- FSDB has established partnerships with other educational programs
  - The St. John's County School District provides opportunities for students who meet the FSDB's criteria to participate in classes and programs not provided at FSDB.
  - The First Coast Technical College provides support and opportunities to meet students' post-secondary transition needs.
  - The St. Johns River State College provides opportunities for students to take classes through dual enrollment.
- FSDB's educational curriculum begins with a Montessori prekindergarten Early Learning Center and extends to their Continuing Education Department for young adult students, with a focus on intensive educational and independent living skills.
- FSDB serves more than 250 children statewide through the Parent-Infant Program.
- Teachers have extensive knowledge of their students' individual needs and maintain positive classroom atmospheres in which students are actively engaged in the learning process.
- The student-to-teacher ratios are very low; interactions between staff and students are very positive.
- There is a high level of collaboration between teachers and other service providers for IEP team meetings, lesson plans, and problem solving.
- Teachers are focused on their students' learning and hold the students accountable for learning.
- Braille classes are available for students who need extra assistance with braille.

- Spanish translation is available to assist teachers in writing letters to the parents and for IEP team meetings.
- Deaf students have constant access to direct communication.
- The classrooms are well organized, structured, and visually welcoming.
- In some classrooms, there are three readability levels of the same books to assist students.
- There is evidence of excellent documentation of daily and weekly progress on IEP goals and objectives.
- To ensure that the students are using the most appropriate instructional and intervention materials in the classroom, the curriculum team evaluates the materials, collaborates extensively with teachers, and reviews lesson plans weekly.

### *Residential Program*

- Students who live in the residential program during the week have age-appropriate opportunities to help develop independence and learn activities of daily living skills.
- High school seniors and continuing education students are allowed to participate in the apartment program, which provides them with experiences to develop higher levels of independence before leaving FSDB.
- Dormitories are located below the classrooms, which minimizes a long travel time in the mornings and increases communication between the residential program staff and classroom staff.

### *Technology*

- FSDB has state-of-the-art technology throughout the campus, which is updated on a regular basis and serves as both a learning and communication tool for staff, students, and families.
- Technology to support learning and student achievement is used in all programs at all levels, and it is evident that the use of technology is a priority for the administrators, students, and teachers.
- Staff and students are provided ongoing training in the use of the many different kinds of hardware and software applications.
- Students are actively involved in producing videos, which are shared through FSDB's Video Library, Vimeo, You Tube, and other media.
- The school has high-level interactive videos with signing storytellers, which alleviates the need for interpreters.

### *Transportation Services*

- Transportation for FSDB students is provided for students who travel home daily as well as students who travel home every Friday for the weekend and return on Sundays. The PBS program is also incorporated into transportation. This kind of transportation system requires extensive logistical coordination.

## Concerns

1. Prior to the on-site visit, the Bureau reviewed the following rules from the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) related to ESE services at FSDB:
  - Rule 6D-3.0021, F.A.C. Individual Educational Plan
  - Rule 6D-3.0022, F.A.C. Independent Educational Evaluation
  - Rule 6D-3.005, F.A.C. Assignment of Surrogate Parents
  - Rule 6D-3.007, F.A.C. Provision of Non-Academic and Extracurricular Services and Activities

The effective dates of these rules are September 8, 1985 – March 22, 2004; therefore, the most current federal and state requirements may not be included.

## Recommendations

1. FSDB should update their ESE rules to ensure that they correlate with current federal regulations and the State Board of Education rules. To avoid future instances of out-of-date ESE rules, it is recommended that FSDB consider referencing the ESE rules in a manner similar to the reference in 6D-3.005, F.A.C.

It should be noted that FSDB participates annually in the ESE Compliance Self-Assessment process, which uses the most current federal and state requirements related to IEP development and implementation.

2. It is recommended that FSDB join other school districts/schools that provide quality programs for students with visual impairments through the “Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments (QPVI)” website at <http://qpvi.com/implements>.
3. It is recommended that FSDB consider using the Functional Vision Evaluation and Learning Media Assessment, which may be accessed through the American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. website at <http://shop.aph.org>.
4. Not all students are exposed to equivalent experience as it relates to Cognitive Complexity levels aligned to state assessment protocols. Teachers should plan using a standards-based approach that sets clear expectations aligned with the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. Each task the students engage in should have a measurable connection to the appropriate benchmark.

## Findings of Noncompliance

1. During the records review related to IEP development, noncompliance was identified in one of the nine records. One annual goal was not measurable.
  - The IEP includes measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the student’s needs that result from the disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and meet the student’s other needs that result from the disability.

Benchmarks or short-term objectives should be included for students with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards or any other student with a disability as determined by the IEP team. (34 CFR §300.320(a)(2))

Student-specific information needed for correction of noncompliance was provided to the district under separate cover in a letter dated February 16, 2012.

2. In accordance with Rule 6A-6.03014, F.A.C., *Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students Who Are Visually Impaired*, "Reevaluation shall occur at least every three (3) years and shall include a minimum of a medical eye examination within the last calendar year, functional vision assessment, learning media assessment, and, if appropriate, any other formal evaluations addressed in the initial evaluation in accordance with Rule 6A-6.0331, F.A.C."

Four of the nine students selected for case studies have visual impairments. In one of the four records reviewed, the medical eye examination was not completed within the calendar year prior to the reevaluation.

### **Corrective Actions**

1. Prior to this report, FSDB corrected the one finding of noncompliance (FNC) related to IEP development. Documentation of this correction has been verified by the Bureau.
2. Prior to this report, FSDB submitted a random sampling of five records to demonstrate 100 percent compliance for the one FNC related to IEP development. Documentation of this correction has been verified by the Bureau.
3. **No later than April 2, 2013**, FSDB must submit documentation that the medical eye examinations were completed within the calendar year prior to the reevaluations for five students who are visually impaired and whose reevaluations occurred after February 3, 2012.

*Note: In accordance with the reporting requirements of the Annual Performance Report for the State Performance Plan, these items will be counted as FNCs related to IEP development and reevaluation. Documentation verifying completion of the remaining component of the corrective action must be received in accordance with the timelines established above, but in no case later than **April 2, 2013**, in order for the district to comply with the requirements of SPP Indicator 15 (timely correction of noncompliance).*

## Technical Assistance

Specific information for technical assistance, support, and guidance regarding IEP development and implementation can be found in the *Exceptional Student Education Compliance Manual 2011–12* available on the General Supervision Website (GSW).

## Bureau Contacts

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

### ***Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems*** (850) 245-0476

Karen Denbroeder, Administrator  
[Karen.Denbroeder@fldoe.org](mailto:Karen.Denbroeder@fldoe.org)

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

Suzan Bastos, Program Specialist  
[Suzan.Bastos@fldoe.org](mailto:Suzan.Bastos@fldoe.org)

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

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

Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist  
[Brenda.Fisher@fldoe.org](mailto:Brenda.Fisher@fldoe.org)

Annette Oliver, Program Specialist  
Florida School for the Deaf and the  
Blind ESE Compliance Liaison  
[Annette.Oliver@fldoe.org](mailto:Annette.Oliver@fldoe.org)

### ***Instructional Support Systems*** (850) 245-0475

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

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

Derek Hemenway, Program Specialist  
[Derek.Hemenway@fldoe.org](mailto:Derek.Hemenway@fldoe.org)

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

### ***Bureau Resource and Information Center*** (850) 245-0477

Judith White, Director  
[BRIC@fldoe.org](mailto:BRIC@fldoe.org)

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

**Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BRIC	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Resource and Information Center
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DHH	Deaf or hard-of-hearing
DSI	Dual-sensory impairment
ESE	Exceptional student education
F.A.C.	Florida Administrative Code
F.S.	Florida Statutes
FAA	Florida Alternate Assessment
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
FNC	Finding of noncompliance
FSDB	Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PEER	Portal to Exceptional Educational Resources
QPVI	Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments
VI	Visual impairment



**Florida Department of Education**  
*Gerard Robinson, Commissioner*

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