

FINAL REPORT OF FOCUSED MONITORING OF
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

GADSDEN COUNTY

MARCH 4 - 6, 2002



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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May 30, 2003

Mr. Sterling Dupont, Superintendent
Gadsden County School District
35 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Quincy, Florida 32351

Dear Superintendent Dupont:

We are pleased to provide you with the Final Report of Focused Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs in Gadsden County. The report from our visit on March 4-6, 2002, includes the system improvement plan proposed by your staff.

An update of outcomes achieved and/or a summary of related activities, as identified in your district's system improvement plan, must be submitted by June 30 and December 30 of each school year for the next two years, unless otherwise noted on the improvement plan.

If my staff can be of any assistance as you continue to 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.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shan Goff".

Shan Goff, Chief
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

Enclosure

cc: Isaac Simmons, School Board Chairman
Members of the School Board
James H. Thompson, School Board Attorney
School Principals
Catie McRae, ESE Director
Jim Warford, Chancellor

SHAN GOFF
Chief
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

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**Gadsden County School District
Focused Monitoring Visit
March 4-6, 2002**

Executive Summary

During the week of March 4-6, 2002, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, conducted an on-site review of the exceptional student education programs in Gadsden County Public Schools. In its continuing efforts to focus the monitoring process on student educational outcomes, the Bureau identified four key data indicators or “triggers.” Gadsden County was selected for monitoring on the basis of its high dropout rate for students with disabilities. The results of the monitoring process are reported under ten categories or related areas that are considered to impact or contribute to the trigger.

Summary of Findings

A summary chart of issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement may be found on page 29 of this report. 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.

Surveys, Focus Groups, Individual Interviews, Case Studies, and Classroom Visits

Staff Training and Knowledge

Staff training and knowledge opportunities are available for staff in Gadsden County. Knowledge of interventions that could keep students in school is generally present at individual schools, although staff reported frustration with the lack of availability of these interventions. There is a need for continued training of teachers in the skill areas related to effectively providing instruction for all students.

Student Attendance

Attendance data reported by schools is not accurate at many schools. In addition, district policies and procedures for tracking attendance and withdrawing students are not consistently communicated to nor understood by school staff. Individual teachers make great efforts to encourage attendance, although school-wide initiatives are lacking.

Dropout Prevention Strategies

No formal district-wide dropout prevention strategies were reported. However, individual schools are implementing activities to help keep students in school. One area of particular concern identified in this category is the general lack of involvement of students with disabilities as evidenced by the sampling of school-based initiatives designed to keep students in school. In addition, individual educational plans (IEPs) do not include measures to help students with disabilities who are at-risk for dropping out stay in school.

Least Restrictive Environment

There are some concerns in the area of the placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. One of these is the lack of inclusion of students with disabilities in elective or wheel classes and lack of participation in extra-curricular activities. A second, crucial concern is the provision of instructional accommodations to students as indicated on the IEP, and the provision of information to regular education teachers regarding students with disabilities who are in their classes. In addition, grading policies are not consistent among schools, and scheduling of students is greatly based on convenience at some schools. Additionally, development of IEP goals does not appear to be consistent with the needs of the students.

Behavior/Discipline

A majority of the schools observed lacked a comprehensive school-wide discipline plan which clearly defined student expectancies, consequences for meeting or failing to meet those expectancies, consistent application of behavior management techniques within and between classrooms, and a structured array of in-school interventions. Noted exceptions to the above finding were New Horizons and Greensboro schools. In addition, there was a comprehensive lack of understanding about the process of conducting functional behavioral assessments and the number of days of suspension that a student accumulates before a functional behavioral assessment is conducted.

Curriculum

Overall, the results of the classroom observations and interviews with district and school staff revealed that individuals confused educational setting (e.g., regular classroom) with access to the general education curriculum. In addition, no pre-vocational, vocational, and career education program options are available for middle school students and such options are limited for high school students. There is a need for a curriculum with a clear scope and sequence across all grade levels, especially in the area of reading. There is a lack of understanding among ESE and regular education teachers concerning the use of instructional accommodations for students with disabilities. Strategies are not routinely implemented for students with disabilities, and curricular materials may be at too high an instructional level for some ESE students. Finally, textbook availability is limited in several schools and most books were outdated.

Assessment

Generally, there is a district-wide emphasis on FCAT preparation. The district encourages students with disabilities to take the FCAT, including the use of accommodations. However, as students progress through school, the belief by parents and teachers that they will pass the FCAT and get a standard diploma decreases. IEP decision-making is impacted by FCAT performance. Analysis of FCAT results and routine classroom assessments were generally not tied in with sequential planning for instruction, and general instruction halted at one school while the focus turned toward preparation for FCAT.

Post-School Transition

The results from the case studies, classroom visits, and individual and focus group interviews revealed that there is disagreement between district and school staff about when the diploma option decision is made. Additionally, it was reported and observed

that the number and range of vocational and job preparatory programs is limited, and virtually no pre-vocational or career awareness programs are offered at the middle school level.

Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Trigger

In almost all interviews, it was stated with great emphasis that there is a need for more vocational education programs for all students, including those with disabilities. Additionally, there is a need to incorporate pre-vocational studies into the middle school curriculum, since students may not stay in high school long enough to take vocational courses there. Overage students who are failing academically and have no vocational education options are at a higher risk for dropping out of school. Another frequently stated need was to increase job opportunities and community involvement with the schools.

Record and Forms Reviews

During the formal record reviews carried out as a part of the standard focused monitoring procedures, individual findings for student records were noted in five areas, as noted on page 25 of the attached report. Systemic findings were identified in the provision of notice of an IEP meeting, identification of the purpose of the meeting and individuals attending the meeting, measurable annual goals, identification of program accommodations and/or modifications, reporting student progress toward annual goals, and the identification of the Course of Study for students with transition plans. In addition, lack of a transition plan was noted for a high school student.

During the forms review, findings were cited on the *Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination*, *Informed Notice of Dismissal*, *Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement*, and the *Annual Notice of Confidentiality* forms. Changes are required for the next printing on the *Notice and Consent for Reevaluation* form.

System Improvement Plan

In response to these findings, the district is required to develop system improvement plan for submission to the Bureau. This plan must include activities and strategies intended to address specific findings, as well as measurable indicators of change. In developing the system improvement measures 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 at the end of this report.

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: examine and evaluate procedures, records, and programs of exceptional student education programs; provide information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assist school districts in operating effectively and efficiently (§229.565, Florida Statutes). In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (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 (§300.600(a)(1) and (2) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations).

The monitoring system established to oversee exceptional student education (ESE) 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.

Method

With guidance from a work group charged with the responsibility of recommending revisions to the Bureau's monitoring system, substantial revisions to the Bureau's monitoring practices were initiated during the 2000-01 school year. Three types of monitoring processes were established as part of the system of monitoring and oversight. Those monitoring processes are identified as follows:

- focused monitoring
- continuous improvement/self assessment monitoring
- random monitoring

During the 2000-01 school year, the Bureau developed and piloted activities for focused monitoring in four districts, examining programs and services for students with disabilities and students identified as gifted. Based on staff and peer monitor feedback, along with further suggestions from the work group, the focused monitoring procedures were further developed and/or revised. It was also determined that the focused monitoring activities for 2002 will examine only programs and services for students with disabilities.

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 ("triggers") that were

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

Beginning in the 2000-01 school year, the following key data indicators were recommended by the monitoring restructuring work group and were adopted for implementation by the Bureau. The indicators and their sources of data are

- 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 statewide assessments by students with disabilities [Data sources: performance data from the assessment files and Survey 3 enrollment data]

It is anticipated that these key data indicators will continue to inform the Bureau's focused monitoring process over a period of several years.

District Selection

Gadsden County School District was selected to be monitored based on a review of data from the 2000-01 school year that was submitted electronically to the Department of Education (DOE) Information Database for Surveys 2, 3, 5, and 9, and from the assessment files. The district was selected due to its *having the highest percentage of students with disabilities dropping out of school when all the districts in the state were rank ordered from highest to lowest.*

On-Site Monitoring Activities

The on-site monitoring visit occurred during the week of March 4, 2002. The on-site activities were conducted by a team composed of six DOE staff, four University of Miami research staff, and four peer monitors. Peer monitors are exceptional student education personnel from other school districts who were trained to assist with the DOE's monitoring activities. On-site monitoring activities consisted of

- interviews with district and school level staff to gather information about the dropout trigger from multiple sources offering different points of view
- focus group interviews with parents, students and teachers to provide a more in-depth perspective about the dropout trigger
- student case studies involving classroom visits and parent phone calls to investigate classroom practices and interventions that might contribute to whether or not an individual student becomes at-risk for dropping out of school

Prior to the on-site visit, Bureau staff notified district staff of the selection of the following schools to be visited based on data related to the dropout rate: Carter-Parramore Middle School, New Horizons, James A. Shanks High School, Greensboro High School, Havana Middle School, and Stewart Street Elementary School.

The on-site selection of students for the case studies at each school was based on criteria that have been identified as being historically characteristic of students who drop out of school. Schools were asked to provide a listing of students who were

- identified as severely emotionally disturbed (SED), emotionally handicapped (EH), and/or specific learning disabled (SLD)
- overage for grade
- identified as having a high absentee rate
- identified as being at-risk for dropping out of school based on other concerns.

Off-Site Monitoring Activities

Surveys were 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, ESE and regular education teachers, and students with disabilities in grades 9-12. Results of the surveys will be discussed in the body of this report. Data from each of the surveys are included as appendix A.

Parent Surveys

Surveys were mailed to 1,338 parents of students with disabilities, with 203 of the parents responding. The survey that was sent to parents was printed in both English and Spanish, and included a cover letter and postage paid reply envelope.

Teacher Surveys

In addition, surveys for all teachers were mailed to each school, with a memo explaining the trigger and the monitoring process. 29 teachers from Havana Elementary School and 10 from George W. Munroe Elementary School responded to the teacher survey.

Student Surveys

For students with disabilities across the district in grades 9-12, a teacher conducted the student survey following a written script. 23 students from Havana Northside High School completed the survey. Since participation in this survey was not appropriate for some students whose disabilities might impair their understanding of the survey, professional judgment was used to determine appropriate participants.

Reviews of Student Records and District Forms

At the Department of Education (DOE), Bureau staff members conducted a compliance review of student records that were randomly selected from the population of students with disabilities prior to the on-site monitoring visit. In addition, Bureau staff reviewed selected district forms and notices to determine if the required components were included. The results of the review of student records and district forms will be described in this report.

Reporting Process

Exit Conference

On the last day of the monitoring visit, a meeting was held with the district ESE administrator and district staff. Preliminary findings and concerns were shared at this time.

Preliminary Report

Subsequent to the on-site visit, Bureau staff prepare a written report. The preliminary report is sent to the district, and Bureau program specialists are assigned to assist the district in developing appropriate system improvements for necessary areas. Data for the report were compiled from sources that have been previously discussed in this document, including the following:

- LEA profile
- parent, teacher, and student surveys
- reviews of student records
- reviews of forms
- parent, teacher, and student focus groups
- case studies, including corresponding parent phone calls
- classroom visits
- interviews with district and school staff

The report is developed to include the following elements: a description of the monitoring process, background information specific to the district, reported information from monitoring activities, and a summary. Appropriate appendices with data specific to the district accompany each report.

Final Report

In completing the system improvement section of the report, every effort should be made to link the system improvement activities 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.

Within 30 days of the district's receipt of the preliminary report, a separate appendix that contains the district's system improvement section, including strategies and activities targeting specific findings, will be submitted to the Bureau for review. Within 30 days of the Bureau's receipt of the district's proposed system improvement section, a final report including the system improvement strategies will be released.

Background

Demographic Information

The data contained in this section of the report is a summary of the data presented in the annual data profile provided to each district. Each element is reported over a period of three years and is presented with comparison data from the state and enrollment group for the district. Profiles are available from the Bureau and from individual districts upon request.

Gadsden County School District has a total school population (PK-12) of 7,431 with 1,338 (18%) students being identified as students with disabilities and 74 (1%) as gifted. Gadsden County is considered a “small/middle” district and is one of 13 districts in this enrollment group. Of the total Gadsden school population, 6% are White; 84% are Black; and 9% are Hispanic. Of the students with disabilities, 8% are White; 87% are Black; and 4% are Hispanic. 67 percent of the district’s population is eligible for free/reduced lunch.

Gadsden County School District is comprised of eight elementary schools, four middle schools, five high schools, one alternative school, one adult education center, two childcare programs, the Florida State Hospital, and one technical institute. Gadsden County School District is a Title I district, as all schools qualify to receive Title I funds.

According to the 2000-01 data, 11% of Gadsden County’s students with disabilities were reported as dropping out of school as compared to 5% for districts of similar enrollment and 5% for the state’s average. Between 1999-00 and 2000-01, data indicate an increase of the dropout rate for students with disabilities for the district, while the dropout rate for nondisabled students remained the same. In addition, the retention rate in Gadsden is higher for both disabled and nondisabled students, compared to the state and enrollment group rates.

The data also indicate a drop over a three-year period in the percentage of students with disabilities who receive a standard diploma (60% in 1989-99 to 42% in 2000-01). Through the Continuous Improvement Monitoring Plan procedures, Gadsden identified graduation with a standard diploma as its area of focus.

Gadsden reports that 37% of their students with disabilities (ages 6-21) spend 80% or more of their school week with their nondisabled peers. This rate is significantly lower than both the state and enrollment group rate of 49%.

The data also indicate a higher out-of-school suspension rate for students with disabilities (26%) than their nondisabled peers (14%) for the 2000-01 school year. The out-of-school suspension rate for Gadsden is higher than the state rate and that of districts of similar student enrollment for both students with disabilities and nondisabled students.

A review of the participation in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) data elicits some concern for students with disabilities. It is noted that the percentage of

students with disabilities taking the FCAT (reading and math) decreased significantly in the tenth grade between years 1999-00 to 2000-01 while the rate remained stable statewide and for districts with similar student enrollment. The review also revealed that no students with disabilities in 10th grade at Shanks High School took the FCAT in 2001, although student membership indicated that there were students who were served in programs who would reasonably have been expected to participate. Although Gadsden County reports a low achievement level for students with disabilities who take the FCAT, it is consistent with the overall student population in the district and the gap between the scores of the students with disabilities and the nondisabled population remains fairly consistent throughout the grades reported.

Reporting of Information

Sources of Information

Data for this report are compiled from a variety of sources accessed before and during the on-site visit including:

- compliance review of seven student records
- review of district forms
- surveys returned by 203 parents
- surveys returned by 39 teachers
- surveys completed by 23 students
- one focus group interview with seven parents representing eight students with disabilities in elementary and middle school
- one focus group interview with 13 exceptional and regular education teachers representing pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade (one pre-kindergarten teacher, five elementary teachers, two middle school teachers, and five high school teachers)
- two student focus groups (group one consisting of 19 students pursuing standard and special diplomas and group two consisting of seven students pursuing a special diploma)
- 47 individual district and school staff interviews
- 12 case studies, including two corresponding parent phone calls
- 21 classroom visits at six of the seven schools visited

The data generated through the surveys, focus group interviews, individual interviews, case studies, and classroom visits are summarized beginning on page 11, while the results from the review of student records and district forms are presented beginning on page 25 of the report. This report provides conclusions with regard to the dropout trigger and specifically addresses related areas that may contribute to or impact the trigger. These areas include

- staff knowledge and training
- student attendance
- dropout prevention strategies
- participation of students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers
- behavior/discipline
- curriculum
- assessment
- post-school transition services
- stakeholder opinions related to the trigger

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 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 dropout rate are also addressed through the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan.

Surveys, Focus Groups, Individual Interviews, Case Studies, and Classroom Visits

Staff Knowledge and Training

It was noted through the interviews that the District office has offered a variety of training that addressed literacy, parent involvement, learning strategies, and conflict resolution. School staff reported receiving information and training from the Institute for Small and Rural Districts (ISR), Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), and the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) on topics related to dropout prevention, including inclusion, transition, and classroom management. Individual school staffs are provided with opportunities to have open discussions about the issues related to student dropout rate. For example, it was reported that absentee rate and truancy are often discussed at monthly faculty meetings at Greensboro High School.

As observed through school-level interviews, school-based staff appear to be knowledgeable about the types of school interventions that could prevent students from dropping out of school including: pre-vocational training, career education, and vocational classes; mentoring, peer counseling, peer mediation, and conflict resolution activities; instructional programs that emphasize reading; and opportunities for parent involvement. School staff reported that the need for such programs is increasing over time.

Focus group interviews with parents and teachers indicated some concern about the extent to which teachers are prepared to provide quality instruction to ESE students. It was suggested that regular education teachers receive more training and that colleges and universities provide their graduates with the skills necessary to effectively deal with behavior problems in the classroom.

In summary, staff training and knowledge opportunities are available for staff in Gadsden County. Knowledge of interventions that could keep students in school is generally present at individual schools, although staff reported frustration with the lack of availability of these interventions. There is a need for continued training of teachers in the skill areas related to effectively providing instruction for all students.

Student Attendance

It was reported that the Gadsden County School District is currently undergoing a data quality review through the Department of Education Office of Education Accountability and Information Services to determine the accuracy of attendance data collected and reported. The review of the attendance data at each school from the Florida School Indicators Report showed a higher absentee rate for students with disabilities than for their nondisabled peers at all elementary and middle schools in Gadsden County with Stewart Street Elementary, Gretna Elementary, Crossroad Academy, and Chattahoochee Middle having the widest discrepancy.

Through the interview process, it was reported that student absences are tracked at the building level and submitted electronically to the district office. The district's Management Information Systems (MIS) office produces a report every two weeks and encourages schools to review the data. Staff at three of the six schools visited reported that attendance data were not correct. In fact, this was substantiated through the case study process where it was determined that several of the case study students were absent more often than the attendance reports indicated. Specifically, this was noted at New Horizons, Carter-Parramore Middle School, Shanks High School, and Greensboro High School.

The district appears to take the tracking of student attendance seriously, although it was also evident that procedures are not being followed consistently. The district hired two visiting teachers who are responsible for following up on students who are absent by making home visits and phone calls. It was determined through interviews with district staff that procedures are in place at the school level when students are absent, however, school staff could not accurately describe the attendance procedures, and the implementation of the procedures varied from school to school. There was also inconsistency in understanding and implementation of the policy regarding withdrawal of students due to non-attendance. In addition, at New Horizons, staff reported that the school had no formalized procedures for maintaining attendance records.

Based on interviews and observations done during school site visits, there appear to be few school-wide initiatives to increase student attendance. However, individual teachers at all the schools visited described extensive personal efforts to encourage their assigned students to come to school. Attendance strategies implemented by individual teachers included providing opportunities to make up missed school work, telephoning home, visiting homes, talking with students in community settings, and making referrals to visiting teachers.

The district reported involvement with the Interagency Council on issues related to truancy and school absences. However, the results of that involvement were not noted. The Family Support Agency Fair that was sponsored by the district was reported to address attendance as part of the agenda.

In summary, attendance data reported by schools is not accurate at many schools. In addition, district policies and procedures for tracking attendance and withdrawing students are not consistently communicated to nor understood by school staff. Individual teachers make great efforts to encourage attendance, although school-wide initiatives are lacking.

Dropout Prevention Strategies

No formal district-wide dropout prevention strategies were reported. However, individual schools are implementing activities to help keep students in school. Those school initiatives are listed below.

Carter-Parramore Middle School

- College Reach Out Program (CROP) offering two years tuition for students entering Tallahassee Community College
- Men of Action working with 12 boys with behavior problems on a weekly basis
- Saturday tutoring by Florida State University students
- Help One Student To Succeed (HOSTS) mentoring program
- Saving Our Youth after-school program

New Horizons

- Apalachee Center for Human Services providing behavioral support

Shanks High School

- Florida State University students providing after-school tutoring
- Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) with 25% of the student body participating
- motivational speakers
- recognizing perfect school attendance at assemblies
- Friday enrichment activities for students exhibiting appropriate behavior

Greensboro High School

- HOSTS mentoring program provided by upperclassmen and outside community volunteers to students with academic and mild behavioral problems
- Saturday school tutoring for FCAT preparation
- monthly prize drawings for students nominated by their teachers or peers for significant improvement in academics, behavior, or attendance
- Failure-Free Reading program

Havana Middle School

- HOSTS mentoring program
- Men of Action
- Florida State University tutoring
- high school students serving as tutors
- FCAT preparation
- business partnerships with Wal-Mart and Harvey's Groceries
- Career Day with guest speakers
- peer counseling classes addressing values, careers, self-concept, and decision-making, and
- pre-vocational courses including home economics and technology

Stewart Street Elementary School

- HOSTS program to help students in reading

- Science Research Associates school-wide reading program
- FCAT Saturday Blitz
- Parents Assuring Kids Success (PAKS) program
- Student of the Month award
- reward program where students who are successful or show improvement eat lunch with the principal
- business partnerships with Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken
- outside agency involvement

Although the schools reported a range of dropout prevention activities, there is some question about the extent to which students with disabilities are involved. Greensboro and New Horizons have implemented school-wide activities and strategies which were specifically intended to decrease the dropout rate for all students. At Greensboro, however, it was also reported that no ESE students are involved in the HOSTS program due to their behavioral problems, nor do they participate in the Failure Free Reading program. In addition, interviews with administrative staff at other schools indicated that students with disabilities generally have access to the programs offered at their schools, but few participate. It was also reported that, except for Greensboro and New Horizons, few students with disabilities are involved in extra-curricular athletics or other clubs.

The case studies yielded some serious concerns. In three specific cases at Carter-Parramore Middle School and New Horizons, the students were identified as having excessive absences (e.g., 42 absences) and were noted by their teachers to be at-risk for dropping out of school. The issues were not addressed on the IEPs for any of those students. On the other hand, a case study student at Havana Middle School was identified as being at-risk for dropping out of school, and the problem was addressed on the IEP through the student's participation in weekly sessions with the Community Intervention Resource Center (CIRC).

Teachers reported that students who are deemed to be particularly at-risk of dropping out are referred to Quincy Educational Academy (QEA), an alternative school. Dropout prevention measures offered at QEA were reported to include intensive tutoring, limited vocational training, inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classes, teacher training specific to making accommodations, motivational assemblies, study buddies, and field trips. In addition, several elementary school teachers reported providing intensive direct instruction in reading, spelling, and writing. This strategy was viewed as an important means of establishing a strong foundation in literacy to enable students to succeed in other subject areas. Teachers perceived literacy as an important factor for keeping students in school.

Most of the students interviewed in the focus groups know of at least one other student who dropped out. Several of these students had siblings who dropped out. However, most students reported having someone at the school in whom they could confide if they were considering dropping out of school. Furthermore, students felt they would rather confide in someone at the school rather than someone at home.

In summary, no formal district-wide dropout prevention strategies were reported. However, individual schools are implementing activities to help keep students in school. One area of concern identified in this category is the general lack of involvement of

students with disabilities as evidenced by the sampling of school-based initiatives designed to keep students in school. In addition, individual educational plans (IEPs) do not include measures to help students with disabilities who are at-risk for dropping out stay in school.

Least Restrictive Environment

The data reported in the demographics section of this report indicates a significantly lower percentage of students spending 80% of their time with non-disabled peers. This placement of students with disabilities is particularly exemplified at Stewart Street Elementary School. It was noted at this school that more students with disabilities are receiving instruction in self-contained classroom environments than in a resource room. This finding may be influenced in part by the presence of two self-contained pre-kindergarten ESE classes. However, for the K-5 population at Stewart Street, it was reported that students with disabilities who are placed in self-contained classes are not offered the opportunity to take art, music, or physical education with their nondisabled peers.

Through classroom visits and interviews with teachers, it was determined that there is no organized and systematic use of instructional accommodations for students with disabilities. It was, however, noted that Greensboro High School provided a list of accommodations to its teachers who were told that the accommodations could be used with any student experiencing difficulty, including those with disabilities. Greensboro High School and Havana Middle School were both noted to use flexible grading for students with disabilities. In interviews and conversations related to class visits, teachers at Havana Middle School reported having lower expectations for ESE students and stated that if ESE students attend class and attempt any work at all they are guaranteed a minimum grade of a "C." This policy was also related by one parent in a phone interview. Shanks High School, however, reported that grades are determined in the same manner as those for nondisabled students and are not inflated because of a student's disability. The difference in expectations for academic performance between 8th grade teachers and 9th grade teachers is inferred as having a large impact on the dropout rate for students in the 9th grade. The result is that these students, upon entering high school, are held accountable for academic skills for which they have not been prepared.

District administrators and school staff indicated that ESE students have access to all extra-curricular programs and dropout prevention activities. There appears to be a discrepancy as to whether or not students with disabilities are in fact involved in those programs. Most individuals interviewed said that ESE students can participate if they wish to do so. One parent, who was contacted by phone, however, said her child could participate in the football program, but there was no transportation to facilitate it.

There was some concern about a particular case study student from Havana Middle School who was receiving instruction for most of the school day in nondisabled classes. Although the student was taking an ESE math class, the IEP did not reflect math goals. The student was not taking an ESE reading class, but the IEP identified reading goals based on low reading scores. The parent indicated a need for study skills that was not addressed on the IEP. Also at Havana Middle School, it was noted that third quarter schedules for all students were completely redone for FCAT preparation, to include four

block periods per day, two each of math and language arts. The IEPs did not reflect this change in scheduling. In addition, teachers who may have never taught a particular ESE student during the regular school schedule were unaware of the specific accommodations or other needs included on the IEPs of the ESE students assigned to them for this FCAT preparation period. Additionally, students who spent the majority of their day with nondisabled peers in a resource setting were not receiving services according to their IEPs.

Focus group interviews with parents, teachers, and students provided additional insight into issues related to placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment and its relationship to the dropout rate in Gadsden County. Some parents expressed concern that their children were not receiving appropriate services. Parents believed that if they got involved, then their children could be placed in classes with fewer students so their child could get help. Otherwise, the general feeling was that their children would “just sit there.” Moreover, parents noted that student placement in a classroom was often based more on teacher availability and space than what is deemed most appropriate for their children. Several parents expressed concern that schools did not foster participation of ESE students and their nondisabled peers in joint extra-curricular activities.

Most teachers did not express specific concerns about the interaction of ESE students with nondisabled students. An elementary school teacher referred to the seamless mainstreaming process at his school. “Our kids don’t know if they are ESE or labeled at all. We have a reading program where everyone goes and is at his own level. Teachers in upper grades work with teachers in lower grades to make modifications for older kids.” However, another elementary school teacher reported that ESE students did not get a chance to participate in one-on-one reading programs, as did nondisabled students. Despite the fact that most ESE students were mainstreamed, some secondary level teachers believed that vocational education might be more appropriate for certain ESE students. Teachers also articulated a concern over the placement of students with learning disabilities, reporting that all students in this program are enrolled in the same academic courses, despite their individual needs.

Most ESE students did not express specific concern about placement or about interaction with nondisabled students. Some students, however, felt they were not treated the same as nondisabled students.

There are some concerns in the area of the placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. One of these is the lack of inclusion of students with disabilities in elective or wheel classes and lack of participation in extra-curricular activities. A second, crucial concern is the provision of instructional accommodations to students as indicated on the IEP, and the provision of information to regular education teachers regarding students with disabilities who are in their classes. In addition, grading policies are not consistent among schools, and scheduling of students is greatly based on convenience at some schools. Additionally, development of IEP goals does not appear to be consistent with the needs of the students.

Behavior/Discipline

While there were one or two significant exceptions seen in nondisabled classes at Havana Middle and Greensboro, in general, classroom disruptions were observed in classes that did not have clearly defined expectancies, structured classroom routines, engaging teaching activities, and adequate age appropriate instructional materials. These classroom observations revealed that most teachers did not consistently employ effective classroom management strategies, and this often contributed to disruptive instructional environments. It was evident through most classroom observations at Havana Middle School that the teachers in the team teaching situation created to prepare students for FCAT were having difficulty controlling student behavior. It was reported that the behavioral specialists assigned to Havana Middle School only work with the self-contained ESE classes and that the other teachers do not have access to their expertise. In addition, while some teachers at New Horizons, Carter-Parramore, Greensboro, and Shanks implemented fairly consistent expectancies and routines, the lack of engaging activities and adequate age appropriate instructional materials impacted the teachers' effectiveness.

The results of the school staff interviews and case studies yielded some concerns about the limited number and types of behavioral and disciplinary interventions available for all students including students with disabilities. At Havana Middle School, after-school detention, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspension are used as disciplinary interventions. For those students who are suspended from school, the work they complete is not credited to their grade. There is a difference between disciplining ESE and nondisabled students. ESE students receive one day of in-school suspension while a nondisabled student will receive two days for the same offense. Interventions do not appear to be used consistently throughout the school.

One exception to the observations reported was at New Horizons School where a school-wide behavioral level system is in place. It was reported that all students at this school are accountable for following the same rules, and all receive the same consequences for the same offenses. Another exception was at Greensboro School, where the majority of teachers were observed to use effective behavior management, including positive reinforcement; appropriate corrective procedures; posting of classroom rules; individual prompts and assistance based on students' performance and skill level; and classroom arrangements which allowed clear visual access to all areas of the classroom.

With regard to in-school interventions, corporal punishment, as an option, was recently eliminated district wide. Out-of-school suspension is the primary intervention used. Shanks High School uses in-school suspension, but cuts in funding have affected its implementation. At Carter-Parramore Middle School, in-school suspension is no longer an option. However, it was reported that students with disabilities are sent home for the remainder of the school day rather than suspending them. It was reported that up until last year, paddling and in-school suspension were available as disciplinary interventions at Greensboro.

Overall, teachers and school administrators are not familiar with functional behavioral assessments and procedures for their implementation. It was noted that behavioral intervention plans were developed for students without having conducted functional

behavioral assessments. At New Horizons, there was once again an inconsistency in conducting functional behavioral assessments even though all the students have a behavioral intervention plan and a full-time behavior specialist assigned to every classroom. At Shanks High School, one case study student, who was identified as emotionally handicapped, did not have his behavioral needs addressed in his IEP. This student was also noted to “skip” the third period class and had not been seen in that class since January 28, 2002.

There appears to be confusion about the number of days that a student is suspended before a functional behavioral assessment is conducted. Some district level staff reported the number to be 10 while others said it was fewer. The ESE Director indicated that the district is trying to be more proactive in developing behavioral intervention plans prior to any suspension issues arising. The director also reported that alternative methods for disciplining students are limited, and that the district is in the process of accessing assistance in addressing alternatives to suspension through FDLRS and the Department of Human Resources Development.

In summary, a majority of the schools observed lacked a comprehensive school-wide discipline plan which clearly defined student expectancies, consequences for meeting or failing to meet those expectancies, consistent application of behavior management techniques within and between classrooms, and a structured array of in-school interventions. Noted exceptions to the above finding were New Horizons and Greensboro schools. In addition, there was a comprehensive lack of understanding about the process of conducting functional behavioral assessments and the number of days of suspension that a student accumulates before a functional behavioral assessment is conducted.

Curriculum

The classroom observations and interviews with staff indicated that students with disabilities at the school sites visited have access to the general curriculum at varying degrees.

At Carter-Parramore, some teachers were observed using individualized instructional strategies, instructional prompts and assistance that were individualized based on student skill level and performance, and schedules which reflect a variety of instructional formats. In addition, students were reported to participate in individual, small, and large group instruction, although several classroom observations revealed that students were disengaged from the learning process and were off task.

The students with disabilities at New Horizons appear to have access to the general education curriculum. However, for the two case study students, the curricular materials were at a level that was too difficult for the students even though the content was age appropriate. Skills were not taught and assessed in the context of real life activities and daily routines. It was reported that students who are working toward standard and special diplomas have access to computerized materials such as an on-line computer program which allowed them to receive high school credits for their work.

At Shanks High School, students with disabilities who are in self-contained classes do not have access to vocational classes. For the case study student who was taking all ESE

classes, the vocational education program identified on the IEP is in fact an executive internship program where the student works as an office aide. In addition, teachers expressed concern about the age of the textbooks and about having an insufficient supply available. Both ESE and regular teachers reported visiting the district book warehouse to try to get enough books for a class set. It was also noted that only regular education classes could reserve the computer lab, and ESE classes did not have working computers available for student use.

In all but one of the classrooms visited at Greensboro High School, it was evident that instruction is in the context of real life experiences. Students participate in individual, small, and large group instruction; students use age appropriate curriculum and activities; and, students have access to the general education curriculum. Several teachers were not aware of nor did they implement, the accommodations identified on IEPs. Similar to the situation at Shanks, it was reported that textbooks are outdated and some classes do not have a sufficient number for all the students. In addition, one class that was visited at Greensboro was observed to have an insufficient number of desks for all students.

The observations and interviews with school staff at Havana Middle School yielded several concerns. Teachers use a different grading scale for ESE students and the specialized grading system is identified on IEPs. Accommodations identified on IEPs were not routinely implemented. In some cases, the teachers were not aware of the accommodations. It was also reported that students with disabilities did not have access to their mainstream classes as indicated on their IEPs for the nine weeks during which students were preparing to take the FCAT. All electives and physical education were cancelled for all students during that time.

The parent, teacher, and student focus group interviews provided additional insight into curricular issues that might contribute to the dropout rate in Gadsden. While some parents felt that their children's curriculum needs were being met, others were concerned about the children not receiving quality instruction. There was general agreement that students were being taught basic life skills rather than academics.

At the teacher focus group, some teachers felt as though students with disabilities were lagging behind nondisabled students, thus making it difficult to provide the general curriculum to these students. One teacher said, "We find that our ESE students do not want to be differentiated from regular kids. They don't want to be seen as different...that is why we try to make modifications to the regular curriculum for them."

Several standard diploma students at the student focus groups indicated that they would like to take regular education classes for their academic subjects. As one student said, "We should do the same curriculum as regular students, but we should take it slower." The same students reported that they had been using the same math textbook throughout their four years in high school. They also stated that they did not have enough books to enable each student in a class to have one during instruction. As a result, students reported that they were not given homework assignments. Students reported that nondisabled students were given new books but that ESE students were not afforded the same privilege. Students recommended that the school provide new books for ESE students. Students in the special diploma option group reported that they were placed in

ESE classes with the exception of physical education and music, which they took with nondisabled students. Students in this group were satisfied with their textbooks in terms of age-appropriateness and the condition of their books.

Overall, the results of the classroom observations and interviews with district and school staff revealed that individuals confused educational setting (e.g., regular classroom) with access to the general education curriculum. In addition, no pre-vocational, vocational, and career education program options are available for middle school students and such options are limited for high school students. There is a need for a curriculum with a clear scope and sequence across all grade levels, especially in the area of reading. There is a lack of understanding among ESE and regular education teachers concerning the use of instructional accommodations for students with disabilities. Strategies are not routinely implemented for students with disabilities, and curricular materials may be at too high an instructional level for some ESE students. Finally, textbook availability is limited in several schools and most books were outdated.

Assessment

The results of the classroom visits, case studies, and individual and focus group interviews all direct themselves to district-wide concern over “passing” the FCAT and the impact the test has on graduation with a standard diploma. In addition, routine assessment measures were observed, but did not appear to impact the development of lessons and activities in which students participated.

Through classroom observations and interviews with school staff, it was determined that teachers provide routine feedback to students on their daily work and assignments. Teachers also track whether or not students are turning in their assignments. Teachers are using a variety of accommodations when assessing student progress including testing without time limits, fewer items on the test, oral assessments, and hands-on activities and projects. The assignment of daily work was largely for the purpose of assigning a grade, not for planning for instruction to enable student progress.

District staff indicated that the requirement of passing the FCAT in order to graduate with a standard diploma impacts the decision making process for students with disabilities. District staff reported that students and parents are worried about students passing the FCAT and, because of that, are requesting a special diploma option at their IEP meetings. It was reported that all ESE students are assigned to the standard diploma option until 10th grade when the actual decision regarding diploma option is made.

Saturday tutoring was a district-wide method of addressing preparation for the FCAT. It is evident that students have access to the FCAT practice materials. However, for one case study student at New Horizons who was not going to take the FCAT, his participation in practice math lessons appeared to be inappropriate, since his math composite score was at the 5th percentile and he was observed to be frustrated and agitated during the lesson.

District and school staff reported that standardized test scores including the FCAT were used to determine student groupings and instructional placements, to plan instruction by setting appropriate goals and objectives, and to identify a student’s need for a modified or

adapted curriculum. It was also reported that FCAT scores were analyzed and nine-week blocks of classes were offered to those students who scored in the bottom quartile. The monitoring team found no other evidence to support these statements. One notable exception was the nine-week rearrangement of schedules at Havana Middle, as it was reported that students were assigned to preparation classes based on their previous FCAT scores. However, this rearrangement was temporary, and preparation activities were done separately from routine instruction.

The parent, teacher, and student focus group interviews provided additional insight into assessment and its relationship to the dropout rate. In general, parents reported that their children were provided with accommodations during the FCAT. Parents who participated in the focus group stated that schools offered additional support outside of school hours to students taking the FCAT, however, they also reported that their children did not feel welcome there. Furthermore, parents believed that the after-school and Saturday programs were targeted towards higher functioning students, and did not provide the assistance needed by their children.

Several teachers from the focus group reported that after-school and peer counseling programs concentrating on FCAT preparations are available to ESE students at their schools. It appeared that elementary school teachers were more optimistic about ESE students being able to pass the FCAT with accommodations, while high school teachers who worked with older ESE students performing substantially below grade level were more pessimistic about students being able to pass the FCAT, even with accommodations.

Students participating in the focus group interviews provided supporting information about FCAT. Most students reported being provided with accommodations, such as extended time. In general, students felt that the math portion of the FCAT was more difficult than the reading section. Many reported that while the items in the reading portion were similar to content covered in their English classes, the items on the math portion were unfamiliar to them. One student felt that since some students did not take algebra, they were not adequately prepared to complete items on the math portion of the FCAT. Students reported that the school offered an after-school program for FCAT preparation. One student felt it had helped her prepare for the FCAT.

Generally, there is a district-wide emphasis on FCAT preparation. The district encourages students with disabilities to take the FCAT, including the use of accommodations. However, as students progress through school, the belief by parents and teachers that they will pass the FCAT and get a standard diploma decreases. IEP decision-making is impacted by FCAT performance. Analysis of FCAT results and routine classroom assessments were generally not tied in with sequential planning for instruction, and general instruction halted at one school while the focus turned toward preparation for FCAT.

Post-School Transition

District staff reported that discussions about diploma options for students usually begin at middle school. However, school staff reported that students work toward a standard diploma until they reach 10th grade and then quite often change to the special diploma

option. District staff stated that performance on the 8th grade FCAT influences the decision about the diploma option selected, while school staff reported that it was the 10th grade performance that impacted the diploma option.

School visits provided information related to transition. At Carter Parramore Middle School, an exploratory “wheel” of elective classes including business education, music, art, physical education, HOSTS, and computers is offered. It was reported that the middle school students at New Horizons do not have access to any pre-vocational or job-related activities. However, students who meet requirements within the school’s level system can participate in the vocational programs at their home school. It was reported that Greensboro High School has a job preparation course and students may also take courses at Gadsden Technical Institute (GTI). Greensboro also offers an On-the-Job Training (OJT) program on campus, home economics, and business courses, and some students with disabilities receive job training by working with the cafeteria or janitorial staff. Shanks High School was the only school visited where activities related to employment, post-school living, and vocational preparation were observed. During one classroom observation at Shanks, the teacher had the class peruse the newspaper for articles reporting health issues in order for students to become aware of the impact of health on an adult’s daily life. The vocational options at Shanks include welding, business technology systems, wellness classes, food preparation, and nutrition. Students can attend GTI for part of the school day. In order to attend the vocational center, students need to be 16 years of age and attain a specific score on the Test of Adult Basic Education. OJT and Community Based Instruction (CBI) are also available at Shanks.

It was reported that there is a job placement specialist who works with the schools. However, the district ESE director reported that students have limited opportunities for community placements in rural Gadsden County. She also reported a long waiting list for placement at the Association for Retarded Citizens program for the students with more significant impairments who are completing high school.

The parent, teacher, and student focus group interviews provided additional insight into transition and its relationship to the dropout rate. Teachers believed that as students get older, their parents became less involved in their education, specifically with regard to IEP meetings. Most teachers reported that students attend their own IEP meetings even when their parents or guardians are not present. Teachers stated that student understanding of career options is limited due in part to the lack of diversity among available options and lack of a viable job market in rural Gadsden County. Moreover, teachers explained that there were limited opportunities for CBI because the community had few businesses that could accommodate students in the program. Teachers also felt that students were not aware of the limitations of graduating with a special diploma (i.e., no admittance into the military, and no admission into college). Teachers described several programs that helped students find jobs and that provided vocational options (i.e., GTI and Big Bend Workforce). However, they also felt that existing vocational programs were not being utilized or made available to schools to the full extent needed.

Many of the students participating in the focus group interviews wanted to join the military. They understood that it was necessary to earn a standard diploma in order to join the military. Other students reported wanting to go to college, become a mechanic,

open their own business, and start work. Several students were employed at a retail store, a local fast food restaurant, and city hall. Some students in the special diploma group had higher aspirations, including becoming a doctor/nurse, studying law at college, and joining the military. When one student reported wanting to go to college, another group member replied, "You aren't going to college with a special diploma." In general, the students felt that the school did not provide enough support to help them find employment. They recommended that the school offer an after-school program that would help them find jobs and fill out applications.

Students thought that the school encouraged ESE students to pursue a standard diploma. They also understood that their choices in terms of college options were limited with a special diploma. Students felt that there should be no differentiation between a standard and special diploma in terms of materials covered. As one student said, "I don't think there should be any special diploma. I don't see why we should be different than others...we just don't learn as fast."

Overall, the results from the case studies, classroom visits, and individual and focus group interviews revealed that there is disagreement between district and school staff about when the diploma option decision is made. Additionally, it was reported and observed that the number and range of vocational and job preparatory programs is limited, and virtually no pre-vocational or career awareness programs are offered at the middle school level.

Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Trigger

Through interviews and focus groups, the members of the monitoring team asked district and school staff, parents, and students for their opinions related to the reasons that Gadsden County has the highest dropout rate in the state for students with disabilities. The individuals who were interviewed through this monitoring process presented these opinions based on their own experiences and unique perspectives. Some of the opinions were substantiated by the monitoring team. The following is a summary of those individual comments.

Home factors such as abuse, neglect, poverty, teenage pregnancy, drug problems, and community involvement with juvenile justice, are seen by school and district staff as contributing to the high dropout rate. Increased parent involvement was identified as being necessary to reduce the percentage of students dropping out of school. Teachers cited the following reasons for students with disabilities dropping out of school: lack of school resources, inappropriate curriculum, not enough individualized attention, insufficient alternatives to the regular high school diploma, under-utilization of vocational education, under-emphasis on value of education by parents, lack of motivators, and classroom overcrowding. A great concern was that there are no consequences for students being absent from school, and child study teams are not addressing a student's attendance problems early enough. In addition, it was the opinion of several individuals that students need additional diploma options from which to choose. It was felt that students drop out because they will not receive a standard diploma.

However, educators were cited as needing to relate to families on a more personal level. Parents identified suspension, poor attendance, untimely evaluation and referral processes by schools, classroom overcrowding, feeling of exclusion from school events, placement issues, and lack of teacher resources as contributing factors. Schools were viewed as having low expectations of students with disabilities. Additionally, higher standards and requiring students to pass the FCAT to graduate with a standard diploma was reported contribute to Gadsden's high dropout rate.

Student focus group members cited potential reasons for students dropping out of school, including being tired of school, pregnancy, making more money selling drugs, and avoiding discipline problems. A few students indicated thinking about dropping out of school but deciding to stay in school because they felt it was important to graduate in order to get a job. One student said, "I want an education...to be in the real world like real people."

In almost all interviews, it was stated with great emphasis that there is a need for more vocational education programs for all students, including those with disabilities. Additionally, there is a need to incorporate pre-vocational studies into the middle school curriculum, since students may not stay in high school long enough to take vocational courses there. Overage students who are failing academically and have no vocational education options are at a higher risk for dropping out of school. Another frequently stated need was to increase job opportunities and community involvement with the schools.

Student Record and District Forms Reviews

Student Record Reviews

A total of seven student records, randomly selected from the population of students with disabilities and excluding those identified as speech only, were reviewed from six schools in Gadsden County. The records were sent to the DOE for review by Bureau staff prior to the on-site visit. The sample group included three high school students, two middle school students, and two students, including one elementary student, from alternative educational programs.

Of the seven IEPs reviewed, all were current. Compliance with the requirements of federal and state laws in the areas of reevaluations and change of placement or services was noted on all IEPs reviewed. However, some of the records contained instances of noncompliance that were not of a systemic nature. These individual findings are as follows:

- the individual designated as interpreter of instructional implications was unclear
- no reason was given for exemption from statewide testing
- duration dates for services extended beyond IEP review date
- "as needed" was used to indicate the frequency of services
- supports for school personnel addressed services for students rather than services for staff

A non-compliance item was also found during the review of an IEP during a case study at Shanks High School, involving a student who is 21 years of age who did not have a transition plan. The district is required, within 60 days of this report, to reconvene the IEP team and develop a transition plan for this student according to IDEA. This individual finding will result in an adjustment in the district's federal funding. Identification of this individual student will be provided under separate cover.

In addition, there were several areas of non-compliance that appeared to be systemic in nature. In the area of providing the parents with notice of an IEP meeting, three of the seven records reviewed failed to identify the purpose of the meeting as a transition meeting. One notice did not indicate that the student would be invited. Three of the IEPs did not indicate on the notice that regular education teachers or other professionals would be in attendance, although the individuals signed the IEP.

Goals for four of the seven students were not measurable, and the IEP team must be reconvened to address these shortcomings. Goals such as "M will improve receptive and expressive language skills as demonstrated by mastery of the skills below" and "B will be monitored for any sign of improvement in her speech" are not measurable. In addition to the lack of measurable annual goals, some objectives were either very general or did not have direct correspondence to the goal. In one instance, the objectives were evaluated by the use of progress reports. The other records contained measurable goals, however two IEPs indicated that identical goals were carried over from one IEP to the next.

In the area of program accommodations and/or modifications, two of the students did not have any instructional accommodations addressed on the IEP. Thus, in these cases, duration, frequency and location of accommodations were also not included.

Five of the seven records failed to indicate the extent to which student progress is sufficient to enable the student to achieve the goal by the end of the year. This finding is generally attributed to the form not including a place to record this information. In addition, the progress report itself was listed as a method of measuring student progress toward annual goals. The progress report form must be revised to allow for reporting of this information.

In three of the records reviewed, the Course of Study statement reflected only the student's preferences and desires, not the academic course of study for the student. One IEP stated that the student wanted to "get job and start working," another student wanted to "study hard and get into all regular classes," and yet another desired to "stay at home and live with Mama."

In summary, individual findings for student records were noted in five areas, as noted above. Systemic findings were identified in the provision of notice of an IEP meeting, identification of the purpose of the meeting and individuals attending the meeting, measurable annual goals, identification of program accommodations and/or modifications, reporting student progress toward annual goals, and the identification of the Course of Study for students with transition plans. In addition, lack of a transition plan was noted for a high school student.

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 four of the areas, and changes are required on one form at the next printing. The district was notified of the specific findings via a separate letter dated June 7, 2002. A detailed explanation of the specific findings may be found in appendix D.

- *Parent Notification of Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting*
- *IEP forms*
- *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*
- *Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination**
- *Informed Notice of Dismissal**
- *Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement**
- *Summary of Procedural Safeguards*
- *Annual Notice of Confidentiality**

* indicates findings that require immediate attention

~ indicates findings that require changes upon the next printing of the form

Summary

Based on the findings described in this report and summarized in appendix E, the district is expected develop system improvement plan in collaboration with Bureau staff. These measures should specify activities and strategies to to address the identified findings in the following areas:

- Staff Training and Knowledge
- Student Attendance
- Dropout Prevention Strategies
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Behavior/Discipline
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Post-School Transition
- Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Trigger
- Student Record Reviews
- District Forms Review

Following is a summary of findings in each of the identified areas that requires an improvement plan, as well as a format for completion of the system improvement plan.

Gadsden County School District Focused Monitoring System Improvement Plan

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)
Staff Knowledge and Training	1. There is a need for continued training of teachers in the skill areas related to effectively providing instruction for all students.		X	<p>Include all teachers in ESE-emphasized workshops.</p> <p>Include Learning Style strategies as part of all training.</p> <p>Learning Style strategies should be mixed in with regular teacher preparation (co-teaching)</p> <p>ESE teacher professional development should include content area information.</p>	<p>By SY 2003, Master Calendar reflects all teachers included in workshops.</p> <p>Teachers’ attendance at workshops documented by MP7.</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Staff Knowledge and Training (cont.)	1. Continued from above			<p>Replace “ESE” with “students functioning below grade level” in descriptions of training.</p> <p>All professional development includes follow-up.</p> <p>Explore additional professional development days and creative options for professional development, including alternative inservice delivery methods (i.e., technology, distance, etc...).</p>	<p>District self-assessment report of random classroom observations reveals effective implementation of Learning Style strategies in 90% of classrooms observed.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p>
Student Attendance	2. District policies and procedures for tracking attendance and withdrawing students are not consistently communicated to nor understood by school staff.		X	<p>Ensure that all staff members know the attendance policies and procedures.</p> <p>Examine pupil progression to include attendance consequences</p>	<p>School’s training agendas will include a review of these procedures for all staff.</p> <p>District self-assessment report indicates consistent understanding and implementation of attendance policies and procedures.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Student Attendance (con't)	3. School-wide initiatives to encourage student attendance are lacking.		X	<p>Investigate technology available that will connect classroom attendance directly to TERMS.</p> <p>Clarify roles and responsibilities of persons working with attendance/truancy.</p> <p>Determine the number of school improvement plans (SIPs) that currently address attendance (baseline).</p> <p>Encourage school improvement plans to include attendance strategies if the data reflects problems.</p> <p>Determine the average attendance rate for all students for the 2001-02 school year (baseline).</p> <p>Examine the attendance/truancy procedures, including problems resulting from "default present."</p> <p>Assist schools in ongoing reward programs for attendance.</p>	<p>District self assessment of attendance data will indicate an improvement in the accuracy of data at all secondary schools.</p> <p>The number of SIPs that address attendance reflects an increase over baseline.</p> <p>May, 2003</p> <p>Attendance rates for all students reflects an increasing trend over baseline.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Dropout Prevention Strategies	Dropout prevention strategies are addressed throughout the plan.				
Least Restrictive Environment	4. There is a lack of inclusion of students with disabilities in elective or wheel classes.	X	X	Review schedules to determine students enrolled in wheel or electives. Survey/interview teachers to determine obstacles to students with disabilities participating in wheel or other elective classes. Identify three target schools for an increase in the participation of students with disabilities in electives, and determine baseline level of participation (May, 2003).	In the three target schools, the participation rate in electives or wheel classes for students with disabilities reveals an increasing trend over baseline. May, 2003; May, 2004
	5. Development of IEP goals does not appear to be consistent with the needs of the students.	X		Provide Quality IEP Training to ESE teachers and program specialists.	District self-assessment review of IEPs reveals measurable goals consistent with the needs of the students on at least 90% of a random sample. May, 2003; May, 2004

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Least Restrictive Environment (cont.)	6. There is a lack of provision of instructional accommodations to students as indicated on the IEP, and the provision of information to regular education teachers regarding students with disabilities who are in their classes.	X	X	<p>Implement across-district procedure to inform general education teachers of accommodation needs of their students.</p> <p>Train general education teachers on appropriate use of accommodations their ESE students and knowing their accommodation plans.</p>	<p>A review of lesson plans during school visits will indicate all teachers plan for appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities in their classes.</p> <p>District self-assessment report reveals 100% of general education sample implements accommodations as indicated on students' IEPs.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Least Restrictive Environment (cont.)	7. There is a lack of participation in extracurricular activities.	X	X	<p>Identify extracurricular activities available at school sites, and determine the # of students with disabilities participating during 2002-03 school year (baseline).</p> <p>Examine reasons for students not participating (transportation, etc.).</p> <p>Write grants to include extracurricular activities.</p> <p>Develop and implement a method to provide information regarding extracurricular activities to parents of students with disabilities (e.g., IEP meetings).</p>	<p>District self-assessment report describes and documents method(s) of informing parents and students of extra-curricular opportunities. May, 2003</p> <p>The # of students with disabilities participating in extracurricular activities reveals an increasing trend over baseline. May, 2003; May, 2004</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Behavior/ Discipline	8. A majority of the schools observed lacked a comprehensive school-wide discipline plan which clearly defined student expectancies, consequences for meeting or failing to meet those expectancies, consistent application of behavior management techniques within and between classrooms, and a structured array of in-school interventions.		X	<p>Determine number of disciplinary referrals, including in-school and out-of-school suspensions for 2002-03 (baseline).</p> <p>Require each school to employ a prevention/intervention discipline plan.</p> <p>Provide time for training the entire school staff in a discipline plan.</p> <p>Provide schools resources and support in determining their plan.</p> <p>Target 8 schools for participation in a school-wide discipline plan.</p> <p>Revise district management discipline plan to include preventive strategies.</p> <p>Monitor discipline referral process.</p> <p>Offer Crisis Prevention Institute training.</p>	<p>Documentation of a prevention/intervention discipline plan in each school.</p> <p>District self-assessment report reveals that at least 90% of teachers follow the discipline management plan according to P. 61 in 'No Misbehavin'.</p> <p>The number of disciplinary referrals reflects a decreasing trend over baseline.</p> <p>The number of in-school suspensions reflects a decreasing trend over baseline.</p> <p>The number of out-of-school suspensions reflects a decreasing trend over baseline.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Behavior/ Discipline (cont.)	9. There was a comprehensive lack of understanding about the process of conducting functional behavioral assessments and the number of days of suspension that a student accumulates before a functional behavioral assessment is conducted.	X		Provide training to ESE teachers prior to start of 2002-03 school year. Program specialists will provide follow-up with individual teachers to ensure adherence to appropriate timelines.	Documentation of training (sign-in sheets; summary of evaluation forms, including recommendations for revisions to training if indicated). July, 2002 District self-assessment report reveals compliance with district policies regarding FBAs. May, 2003; May, 2004

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Curriculum and Instruction	10. No pre-vocational, vocational, or career education program options are available for middle school students and such options are limited for high school students.		X	<p>Determine current availability of vocational courses or programs, including prerequisite skill requirements.</p> <p>Determine the number of number of students currently enrolled in vocational or careers exploration courses.</p> <p>Make courses available to student who can avail themselves of vocational courses.</p> <p>Solicit technical assistance from DOE, (the Bureau and Workforce Development), to develop programs, interventions, and strategies related to vocational training.</p> <p>Integrate skill remediation strategies with vocational courses to meet requirements of law.</p> <p>Provide vocational teachers training in the standards (teachable through the vocational course content) students need for remediation.</p>	<p>Class rolls indicate an increasing trend over baseline in the number of ESE students enrolled in vocational or careers exploration classes.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Curriculum and Instruction (cont.)	11. There is a need for a curriculum with a clear scope and sequence across all grade levels, especially in the area of reading.		X	<p>Determine if there is a scope and sequence for reading. Team meets with Reading Resource person to develop such, if needed.</p> <p>Review the use of existing reading curricula in ESE classrooms to determine the level of implementation.</p> <p>Provided training in the use of district-adopted reading curriculum.</p>	<p>Documentation of scope and sequence across grade levels for reading instruction.</p> <p>District self-assessment report of a random sample of ESE classrooms reveals effective implementation of reading instruction.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p>
Assessment	12. Analysis of FCAT results and routine classroom assessments were generally not tied in with sequential planning for instruction.	X	X	Utilize program specialists to monitor classrooms and IEP meetings for data based decision-making driving the instruction.	<p>District self-assessment report of random sample of IEPs reveals documentation of assessment results in development of IEPs.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Post-School Transition	13. A frequently stated need was to increase job opportunities and community involvement with the schools.	X	X	<p>Job Coach profiles student wanting jobs, then seeks employment opportunities for students.</p> <p>Determine the number of ESE students currently placed in OJT positions (baseline).</p> <p>Establish more relationships with small businesses and agencies.</p> <p>Explore the location and number of job opportunities and apprenticeships in the community.</p> <p>Establish a collaborative effort between ESE dept, alternative school, guidance counselors, and community businesses to monitor job opportunities.</p>	<p>District self-assessment report documents interactions among ESE, alternative education, other school personnel, and community agencies or businesses.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p> <p>District self-assessment report reveals increasing trend in the number of ESE students placed in OJT positions.</p> <p>May, 2003; May, 2004</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Post-School Transition (cont.)	14. There is disagreement between district and school staff about when the diploma option decision is made.	X		Provide guidelines to ensure agreement between the district and the schools on the considerations and timelines for diploma options. Continuous Improvement/Self Assessment Monitoring Plan addresses rate of graduation with a standard diploma for students with disabilities.	District self-assessment report reveals consistent use of district-established guidelines related to diploma options. May, 2003; May, 2004
Records and Forms Reviews	15. Systemic record review findings were identified in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provision of notice of an IEP meeting • identification of the purpose of and attendees at the meeting • measurable annual goals • identification of program accommodations and/or modifications • reporting student progress toward annual goals • identification of the Course of Study for transition plans. 	X		Provide Quality IEP Training to ESE teachers and program specialists.	District self-assessment review of IEPs reveals compliance with state and federal requirements on at least 90% of a random sample. May, 2003; May, 2004

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Records and Forms Reviews (continued)	16. Forms review findings requiring immediate attention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Informed Notice of Dismissal</i> • <i>Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination</i> • <i>Annual Notice of Confidentiality</i> • <i>Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement</i> 	X		New forms were submitted to DOE for review in April, 2001. Corrections were made to forms by Gibco during the summer of 2002. All forms were revised to reflect corrections.	Revised forms submitted to DOE. January, 2003 District self-assessment report reveals forms used for 2002-03 school year reflect all corrections. May, 2003
	17. Forms review findings that require changes at the next scheduled printing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation</i> 				Revised forms submitted to DOE. January, 2003

Appendix A- Survey Results

**Gadsden County School District
 Focused Monitoring Report
 Parent Survey Report**

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 in conjunction with the Bureau's district monitoring activities. In 1999, the parent survey was administered in 12 districts; in 2000, it was administered in 15 districts and two special schools; and, in 2001, it was administered in four districts.

In conjunction with the 2002 Gadsden County monitoring activities, the parent survey was sent to parents of the 1,338 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 203 parents (PK, n=18; K-5, n=83; 6-8, n=56; 9-12, n=46) representing 15% of the sample, returned the survey. 38 surveys were returned as undeliverable, representing 3% 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.

	% Yes
Staff Training and Knowledge	
• Overall, I am satisfied with the level of knowledge and experience of school personnel.	72
Attendance	
N/A	
Dropout Program	
• My child's school does all it can to keep students from dropping out of school.	71
LRE	
▪ At my child's IEP meetings we have talked about ways that my child could spend time with students in regular classes.	61
▪ My child's school encourages acceptance of students with disabilities.	69
▪ My child's school involves students with disabilities in clubs, sports, or other activities.	65
Behavior/Discipline	
N/A	

Curriculum

- Overall, I am satisfied with the amount of time my child spends with regular education students. 77
- Overall, I am satisfied with the way special education teachers and regular education teachers work together. 73
- At my child's IEP meetings we have talked about ways that my child could spend time with students in regular classes. 61
- At my child's IEP meetings we have talked about which diploma my child may receive. 50
- At my child's IEP meetings we have talked about the requirements for different diplomas. 40
- My child's teachers give students with disabilities extra time or different assignments, if needed. 68
- My child's school provides students with disabilities updated books and materials. 59
- My child's school offers a variety of vocational courses, such as computers and business technology. 62
- My child's school offers students with disabilities the classes they need to graduate with a standard diploma. 69

Assessment

- At my child's IEP meetings we have talked about whether my child would take the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test). 57
- At my child's IEP meetings we have talked about whether my child should get accommodations (special testing conditions), for example, extra time. 53

Transition

- My child is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 81
- My child's school provides information to students about education and jobs after high school. 54

Other Items

- Overall, I am satisfied with the exceptional education services my child receives. 72
- Overall, I am satisfied with my child's academic progress. 72
- Overall, I am satisfied with the effect of exceptional student education on my child's self-esteem. 68
- Overall, I am satisfied with the way I am treated by school personnel. 81
- Overall, I am satisfied with how quickly services are implemented following an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) decision. 67
- My child is usually happy at school. 80
- My child spends most of the school day involved in productive activities. 69

	% Yes
	91
▪ My child has friends at school.	80
▪ My child is aiming for a standard diploma.	83
▪ At my child's IEP meetings we have talked about whether my child needed services beyond the regular school year.	76
▪ My child's teachers set appropriate goals for my child.	86
▪ My child's teachers expect my child to succeed.	72
▪ My child's teachers give homework that meets my child's needs.	73
▪ My child's teachers call me or send me notes about my child.	86
▪ My child's teachers are available to speak with me.	76
▪ My child's school wants to hear my ideas.	81
▪ My child's school encourages me to participate in my child's education.	66
▪ My child's school informs me about all of the services available to my child.	67
▪ My child's school addresses my child's individual needs.	77
▪ My child's school makes sure I understand my child's IEP.	65
▪ My child's school explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's IEP.	72
▪ My child's school sends me information written in a way I understand.	63
▪ My child's school sends me information about activities and workshops for parents.	77
▪ I have attended one or more meetings about my child during this school year.	63
▪ I participate in school activities with my child.	35
▪ I am a member of the PTA/PTO.	22
▪ I belong to an organization for parents of students with disabilities.	32
▪ I have used parent support services in my area.	89
▪ I am comfortable talking about my child with school staff.	40
▪ I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement.	

**Gadsden County School District
 Focused Monitoring Report
 Teacher Survey Report**

Teacher Survey Results

In order to obtain the perspective of teachers who provide services to students with disabilities, 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 focused monitoring activities. The survey was administered for the first time during the 2002 monitoring year.

Surveys were sent to all teachers at all schools in Gadsden County. A total of 39 teachers from Havana Elementary School and George W. Munroe Elementary School responded. The results are compiled below. Percentages reported are based on the numbers of respondents replying that their school was “consistent” in the areas surveyed.

HIGH	%
(more than 75% of respondents reported consistency in these areas)	
<hr/>	
• To help students with disabilities who take the FCAT my school provides teachers with FCAT test preparation materials.	92
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school makes an effort to involve parents in their child's education.	89
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school develops IEPs according to student needs.	85
• To help students with disabilities who take the FCAT, my school provides students with appropriate testing accommodations.	84
• To help students with disabilities who take the FCAT, my school aligns curriculum for students with the standards that are tested on the FCAT.	83
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school conducts ongoing assessments of individual students' performance.	81
• To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school ensures that the general education curriculum is taught in ESE classes to the maximum extent possible.	77
MIDDLE	%
(more than 25% but fewer than 75% of respondents reported consistency in these areas)	
<hr/>	
• To help students with disabilities who take the FCAT, my school gives students in ESE classes updated textbooks.	71
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school ensures that classroom material is culturally appropriate.	70

Teacher Survey Results (continued)

MIDDLE (continued) (more than 25% but fewer than 75% of respondents reported consistency in these areas)

	%
	67
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school encourages participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities.	67
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school ensures that classroom material is grade- and age-appropriate.	64
• To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school places students with disabilities into general education classes whenever possible.	61
• To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school ensures that students with disabilities feel comfortable when taking classes with general education students.	60
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school ensures that students are taught strategies to manage their behavior as needed.	59
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school provides positive behavioral supports.	58
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school allows students to make up credits lost due to disability-related absences.	56
• To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school modifies and adapts curriculum for students as needed.	56
• To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school addresses each student's individual needs.	55
• To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school provides adequate support to GE teachers who teach students with disabilities.	52
• To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school encourages collaboration among ESE teachers, GE teachers and service providers.	46
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school provides social skills training to students as needed.	44
• To encourage students with disabilities to stay in school, my school implements an IEP transition plan for each student.	43
• To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school offers teachers professional development opportunities regarding curriculum and support for students with disabilities.	39
• To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school implements a dropout prevention program.	28
• To ensure that as many students with disabilities as possible graduate with a standard diploma, my school provides extra help to students who need to retake the FCAT.	

Teacher Survey Results (continued)

LOW

(fewer than 25% of the respondents reported consistency in these areas)

%

-
- | | |
|---|----|
| • To encourage students with disabilities to stay in school, my school teaches transition skills for future employment and independent living. | 20 |
| • To encourage students with disabilities to stay in school, my school provides students with job training. | 16 |
| • 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. | 16 |
| • To ensure that as many students with disabilities as possible graduate with a standard diploma, my school encourages students to aim for a standard diploma when appropriate. | 16 |
| • To encourage students with disabilities to stay in school, my school provides students with information about options after graduation. | 15 |
| • To encourage students with disabilities to stay in school, my school coordinates on-the-job training with outside agencies. | 15 |

**Gadsden County School District
 Focused Monitoring Report
 Student Survey Report**

Student Survey Results

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 contracted 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.

Surveys and administration scripts were sent to all schools in Gadsden county with students in grades 9-12. Havana Northside High School was the only school that submitted surveys, with 62% of students with disabilities at that school responding. The percentage of students with a reply of “yes” to each survey question is given below.

HIGH (more than 75% of respondents replied with “yes”)	%Yes
• At my school, ESE students are encouraged to stay in school.	91
• I will probably graduate with a regular diploma.	91
• At my school, regular education teachers give ESE students extra help if needed.	87
• At my school, regular education teachers believe that ESE students can learn.	87
• At my school, regular education teachers teach ESE students things that will be useful later on in life.	87
• I took the FCAT this year.	87
• At my school, ESE teachers give students extra help, if needed.	83
• At my school, ESE students get the help they need to well in school.	83
• At my school, ESE students fit in at school.	83
• In my English/reading classes, we work on the kinds of skills that are tested on the reading part of the FCAT.	83
• At my school, ESE teachers understand ESE students' needs.	78
• At my school, ESE teachers believe that ESE students can learn.	78
• At my school, ESE students are treated fairly by teachers and staff.	78
• At my school, ESE students spend enough time with regular Education students	78
• At my school, ESE students participate in clubs, sports, and other activities.	78
• I agree with the type of diploma I am going to receive.	78
• I know what courses I have to take to get my diploma.	78
• Teachers help ESE students prepare for the FCAT.	78

Student Survey Results (continued)

MIDDLE

(more than 25% but fewer than 75% of respondents replied with “yes”)	%
	74
• At my school, ESE teachers teach students in ways that help them learn.	74
• At my school, ESE students can take vocational classes such as computers and business technology.	74
• I know the difference between a regular and a special diploma.	74
• At my school, ESE teachers give students extra time or different assignments, if needed.	70
• At my school, ESE teachers teach students things that will be useful later on in life.	70
• I am taking the following regular/mainstream classes: Electives (physical education, art, music)	70
• In my math classes, we work on the kinds of problems that are tested on the math part of the FCAT.	70
• I am taking the following regular/mainstream classes: English	65
• I am taking the following regular/mainstream classes: Science	65
• At my school: Regular education teachers teach ESE students in ways that help them learn.	65
• I had a say in the decision about which diploma I would get.	65
• I am taking the following regular/mainstream classes: Math	61
• At my school: Regular education teachers give ESE students extra time or different assignments if needed.	61
• At my school, ESE students get information about education after high school.	61
• I am taking the following regular/mainstream classes: Social Studies	57
• At my school, Regular education teachers understand ESE students' needs.	57
• I had a say in the decision about which classes I would take.	57
• I am taking the following ESE classes: English	52
• I am taking the following regular/mainstream classes: Vocational (woodshop, computers)	52
• I am taking the following ESE classes: Math	48
• I was invited to attend my IEP meeting this year.	48
• I am taking the following ESE classes: Social Studies	39
• At my school, ESE teachers provide ESE students with updated books and materials.	39
• At my school, ESE students get work experience (on-the-job training) if they are interested.	39
• I had a say in the decision about special testing conditions I might get for the FCAT or other tests.	35
• I am taking the following ESE classes: Science	30

Student Survey Results (continued)

MIDDLE (continued)

(more than 25% but fewer than 75% of respondents replied with “yes”) %

- I received accommodations (special testing conditions) for the FCAT. 30
- I attended my IEP meeting this year. 26

LOW

(fewer than 25% of respondents replied with “yes”)

- I am taking the following ESE classes: Vocational (woodshop, computers) 22
- I am taking the following ESE classes: Electives (physical education, art, music) 17

Appendix B- Monitoring Team Members

**Gadsden County
Focused Monitoring Visit
March 4-7, 2002**

ESE Monitoring Team Members

Department of Education Staff

Cathy Bishop, Program Supervisor, Program Administration and Evaluation
Iris Anderson, Program Specialist IV, Program Administration and Evaluation
Kelly Claude, Program Specialist IV, Program Administration and Evaluation
Lee Clark, Program Specialist IV, Program Administration and Evaluation
Kim Komisar, Program Specialist IV, Program Administration and Evaluation
Tury Lewis, Program Specialist IV, Program Administration and Evaluation

Peer Reviewers

Mary Camp, Staffing Specialist, Sumter County Schools
Debra Johns, Lead Staffing Specialist, Polk County Schools
Bambi Lockman, ESE Director, Santa Rosa County Schools
Angela Spornraft, Staffing Specialist, Hardee County Schools

Contracted Staff

Batya Elbaum, Project Director, University of Miami
Adalis Anasagasti, Researcher, University of Miami
Emily Joseph, Researcher, University of Miami
Christopher Sarno, Researcher, University of Miami

Appendix C- Glossary of Acronyms

Glossary of Acronyms

Bureau	Bureau of Instructional Support & Community Services
CBI	Community Based Instruction
CIRC	Community Intervention Resource Center
CROP	College Reach Out Program
DOE	Department of Education
EH	Emotionally Handicapped
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
GTI	Gadsden Technical Institute
HOSTS	Help One Student To Succeed
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
MIS	Management Information Systems
OJT	On-the-Job Training
PAEC	Panhandle Area Educational Consortium
PAKS	Parents Assuring Kids Success
Pre-K(PK)	Prekindergarten
QEA	Quincy Educational Academy
ROTC	Reserve Officers Training Corps
SED	Severely Emotionally Disturbed
SLD	Specific Learning Disability

Appendix D- Forms Review

**Gadsden County
Focused Monitoring Report
Forms Review**

This forms review was completed as a component of the focused monitoring visit conducted on March 4-7, 2002. The following district forms were compared to the requirements of applicable State Board of Education rules, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), applicable sections of Part 300, Code of Federal Regulations, and the Monitoring Work Papers/Source Book for 2002. The review includes 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.

Notice and Consent for Initial Placement

Form Eligibility and Assignment for Initial Placement

Source Book/Work Paper - Program Areas

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

This form contains the components for compliance.

Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation

Form ESE#9 (Rev 08/99 Printed 8/01) Parent Notice/Consent for Evaluation

Source Book/Work Paper - Evaluation

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

This form contains the components for compliance.

Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation

Form ESE#19 (Rev. 8/2001) Parent Notice/Consent for Reevaluation

Source Book/Work Paper - Reevaluation

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

This form contains the components for compliance; however, at the next preprinting of this form, the following recommendations are proposed:

- In the section that describes options considered, clarify option three by stating, “Three year reevaluation *testing* is not necessary at this time.”
- Revise the sentences above the parent’s signature to read “If reevaluation *testing* is determined...” and, “I understand that reevaluation *testing*....”

Notification of Change in Placement, Notification of Change in FAPE

Form ESE#13n (Rev. 8/2001) *Informed Notice of Change of Placement Informed Notice of Change of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)*

Source Book/Work Paper - IEP

Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503

This form contains the components for compliance.

Informed Notice of Refusal

Form ESE#13g (Rev. 8/2001) *Notice of Refusal to Take a Specific Action*

Source Book/Work Paper - IEP

Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503

This form contains the components for compliance.

Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement

Form None *Eligibility and Assignment Staffing Form*

Source Book/Work Paper - Ineligible

Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503

The following must be addressed.

- On this form, the wording “reviewed and approved” must be changed to “reviewed.” This change conforms to the requirement identified in the most recent Special Programs and Procedures document.
- The form must specify that the parents of a child with a disability have protections under the procedural safeguards, a statement of where a copy of the procedural safeguards may be obtained and sources for a parent to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of IDEA. While the form does give this information under the section entitled “Parent Consent for Initial Placement,” it is not clear that this information applies to all of the purposes covered under this form. It is recommended that the form be revised so that this information clearly applies to all situations for which this form is used.
- The requirement that the notice must contain a description of any options the district considered in regard to ineligibility, and the reasons those options were rejected does not appear on the form.
- The requirement that the notice must contain a description of any other factors relevant to the district’s determination of ineligibility does not appear on the form.

Notice: Informed Notice of Dismissal

Form Eligibility and Assignment Staffing Form

Source Book/Work Paper - Dismissal

Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503

The following must be addressed.

- The section of the form that identifies dismissal as a result of a staffing committee could only be used for students identified as gifted. Since the reevaluation process must be used for students with disabilities prior to dismissal, and this process is the obligation of the IEP team, a decision regarding dismissal must be the result of the IEP meeting.
- On this form, the wording “reviewed and approved” must be changed to “reviewed.” This change conforms to the requirement identified in the most recent Special Programs and Procedures document.
- The form must specify that the parents of a child with a disability have protections under the procedural safeguards, a statement of where a copy of the procedural safeguards may be obtained and sources for a parent to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of IDEA. While the form does give this information under the section entitled “Parent Consent for Initial Placement,” it is not clear that this information applies to all of the purposes covered under this form. It is recommended that the form be revised so that this information clearly applies to all situations implied.
- The requirement that the notice must contain a description of any options the district considered in regard to dismissal, and the reasons those options were rejected does not appear on the form.
- The requirement that the notice must contain a description of any other factors relevant to the district’s determination of dismissal does not appear on the form.

Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination

Form Eligibility and Assignment Staffing Form

Source Book/Work Paper - Staffing, IEP

Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.534

The following must be addressed:

- Under the “Eligibility Determination” section of the form, the wording “approved” and “disapproved” must be changed to “reviewed.” This change conforms to the requirement identified in the most recent Special Programs and Procedures document.

Confidentiality of Information

Form ESE #24 (Revised 8/2000) *Annual Notice of Confidentiality*

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

The following must be addressed:

- The notice of confidentiality provided does not include: the right to inspect and review the student’s educational records, including the procedures to exercise this right; the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information; the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the district to comply with the requirements of FERPA; and, if the educational agency has a policy of disclosing education records to school officials determined to have a legitimate educational interest the specification for determining who constitutes a school official and what constitutes a legitimate educational interest is specified.