

FINAL REPORT OF VERIFICATION MONITORING OF
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

GLADES COUNTY

JANUARY 20 - 21, 2004



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
ESE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Ms. Kathleen Mathis, Director
Exceptional Student Education
Glades County School District
P.O. Box 459
Moore Haven, Florida 33471

Dear Ms. Mathis:

Thank you for your hospitality and professionalism during our recent verification monitoring visit on January 20-21, 2004. During the visit, the district provided a status report in response to the final monitoring report from the May 2002 random monitoring visit. Visits to selected sites were conducted to verify information presented by the district. Bureau staff has reviewed the additional information collected during the visit and a report of this visit is attached.

While the district has completed the strategies of the system improvement plan resulting from the 2002 monitoring visit, the district must submit a final status report in June 2004 related to this plan. In addition, the district will be required to revise its continuous improvement monitoring plan in its June 2004 report to incorporate the following findings from this visit:

- least restrictive environment
- gifted
- student records and forms
- oversight of juvenile justice facility

We appreciate your ongoing efforts on behalf of exceptional students. We appreciate your ongoing efforts on behalf of exceptional students. Please contact Kim Komisar, Program Director, at (850) 245-0476 or via electronic mail at Kim.Komisar@fldoe.org if we can be of any further assistance to your district.

Sincerely,

Michele Polland

Michele Polland, Acting Chief
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

cc: Wayne Aldrich
Eileen Amy
Kim Komisar

MICHELE POLLAND
Acting Chief
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

**Glades County Final Monitoring Report
Verification Monitoring Visit
January 20-21, 2004**

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Glades County School District Verification Monitoring Visit January 20-21, 2004

During the week of January 19, 2004, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, conducted an on-site verification review of the exceptional student education (ESE) programs in Glades County Public Schools. The primary purpose for conducting verification visits to districts previously monitored is to afford school districts an opportunity to offer validation of the activities they have undertaken through their system improvement plans. These visits provide an assurance to the Bureau that the strategies agreed to in the improvement plans are being implemented. They also give districts an opportunity to demonstrate progress, as well as for districts to request additional technical assistance regarding the implementation of their system improvement plans.

Glades County was selected for a random monitoring visit in 2002. The results of the verification visit are reported under the following categories or related areas that were included in the final monitoring report of the random monitoring visit conducted May 13-16, 2002:

- general supervision
- assessment
- behavior management
- curriculum and instruction
- least restrictive environment
- post-school transition
- pre-k transition from Part C to Part B programs
- parent involvement
- gifted
- student records review
- district forms review
- special category record reviews

Site Visit

The primary on-site activity conducted as part of the verification monitoring visit was a demonstration by the district of the strategies implemented thus far through the system improvement plan developed as result of the 2002 random monitoring process. The components of the demonstration were determined by the district, based on the areas targeted for improvement, and the types of activities conducted by the district.

The demonstration by Glades County included a presentation related to the implementation of strategies identified in the system improvement plan based on categories from the final monitoring report. Kathleen Mathis, Director, Exceptional Student Education, served as the coordinator and point of contact for the district during the monitoring visit.

In addition to the district presentation, the verification visit included visits to Moore Haven Elementary School and Moore Haven Junior/Senior High School for the purpose of validating information provided during the district presentation. The visit also included compliance

monitoring in the areas of individual educational plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities, the provision of counseling as a related service, and the provision of speech and language services. School site visits included the following:

- nine interviews with selected school and district staff
- two classroom observations
- reviews of 11 IEPs for students with disabilities
- review of six special category records for students with disabilities
- review of one matrix of services document

Results

General Supervision

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of general supervision were related to the tracking of academic and behavioral progress of students with disabilities. Strategies implemented to address the area of general supervision included the following:

- staff development related to data analysis
- collaboration between assistant principal and ESE director regarding student suspensions
- training for management information services (MIS) staff related to the use of existing data programs
- provision of extra planning period for lead ESE teacher at the high school for tracking student performance

As a result of these efforts, improvement has been made in the area of general supervision. Interviews with school-level staff at the visited schools verified the information presented by the district. There is a system in place to monitor the academic and behavioral performance of students with disabilities. The district has completed all strategies required in the system improvement plan and will be required to submit a final status report in this area in its 2004 mid-year continuous improvement report.

Assessment

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of assessment were related to the provision of instructional accommodations for students with disabilities and the lack of a clear, consistent, enforceable policy for promotion and retention. Strategies implemented by the district to address compliance in the area of assessment included the following:

- training in Dealing with Differences provided by Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
- dissemination of a teacher survey related to provision of accommodations
- use of instructional aides in general education classrooms
- revision of district pupil progression plan

The district reported the findings of the teacher survey. Fifty-four teachers returned the survey. Of those who returned the survey, six teachers indicated that they do not have students with disabilities in their classes. Of the remaining teachers, 97.9% indicated that they provide accommodations to students with disabilities and listed accommodations that they provide. Accommodations listed were varied, indicating that teachers are providing accommodations based on students' needs and IEP requirements. Interviews with school staff verified the use of individualized accommodations; general education teachers reported that they are provided with IEPs for students with disabilities who are in their classes.

The district has revised its pupil progression plan to meet all state requirements. It provides district policy for promotion and retention of all students. The revised pupil progression plan is scheduled for approval at the January 2004 board meeting.

The district has completed all strategies required in the system improvement plan and will be required to submit a final status report in this area in its 2004 mid-year continuous improvement report.

Behavior Management

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of behavior management included the need for a consistent, comprehensive school-wide discipline plan with an array of interventions; the lack of the development and implementation of functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) and behavior intervention plans (BIPs) for students who demonstrate the need; and the use of a modified day after-school program. Strategies implemented by the district to address these areas include the following:

- review of district discipline policy by all teachers at pre-school inservice
- training on FBAs and BIPs provided through Florida Diagnostic Learning and Resources System (FDLRS) for ESE teachers and guidance counselors
- follow-up FBA and BIP training for teachers
- research conducted to locate alternatives to the modified day after-school program

Interviews confirmed that discipline policies were discussed at planning meetings prior to the beginning of school. The district also provided the Bureau with a copy of the code of student conduct which includes policies and procedures for student discipline. The continuum of interventions includes verbal corrections, parent and student conferences, after school detention, make-up time, Saturday detention, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspension. Students were provided with the district policy in student handbooks at the beginning of the school year.

Documentation by the district related to the development and implementation of FBAs and BIPs included copies of BIPs for several students. Bureau staff also reviewed FBAs for students whose BIPs were provided. Interviews with school staff verified the implementation of BIPs for students who demonstrated a need. ESE teachers develop BIPs for students and provide information to general education teachers. In addition, general education teachers confirmed that they are provided with information regarding students who have BIPs. School staff reported that development and implementation of FBAs and BIPs is labor intensive and difficult. However, teachers reported that they continue their efforts in order to determine effective strategies for specific students. The district continues to support improvement in the area of development and implementation of FBAs and BIPs.

During the 2002 monitoring visit there was no evidence of FBAs and BIPs for students who demonstrated the need for positive behavioral interventions; during this visit, there was evidence of FBAs and BIPs and of their use in general education classrooms as well as in ESE classrooms. The district's efforts to improve behavioral services for students with disabilities have had a positive impact. The district has completed all strategies required in the system improvement plan and will be required to submit a final status report in this area in its 2004 mid-year

continuous improvement report. It is also recommended that the district address behavior and discipline in its continuous improvement monitoring plan.

Curriculum and Instruction

The only finding from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of curriculum and instruction was that there was a need for a structured and comprehensive curricular scope and sequence that incorporates Sunshine State Standards (SSS) for students with disabilities. Strategies implemented to address the area of curriculum and instruction included the following:

- use of general education materials (modified for special diploma students) in all ESE classes
- training in the general education curriculum for all ESE teachers
- use of curriculum guides addressing SSS, benchmarks, and grade-level equivalents
- use of supplemental curricular materials
- purchase and implementation of a curriculum for autism

In order to implement the most effective curriculum for ESE students, rather than develop a new K-12 ESE curriculum, the district chose to use state-adopted curricular materials with SSS embedded in all ESE classes. The use of this curriculum ensures the use of the general education curriculum for students with disabilities and was confirmed through classroom visits and interviews. The implementation of this curriculum meets the requirements in this area of the system improvement plan.

Least Restrictive Environment

The only finding from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of least restrictive environment (LRE) was that some students with disabilities in self-contained classes had little opportunity for contact with non-disabled peers. According to the 2003 local education agency (LEA) profile, 47% of students with disabilities in the district are served in the regular class placement (80% or more of the day with nondisabled peers). This is near the state average of 48%. In contrast, 88% of the students identified as educable mentally handicapped (EMH) are served in separate class placement (less than 40% of the day with nondisabled peers). This is above the state average of 61%. Strategies implemented by the district to address this area included:

- review of student schedules
- adjustment of student schedules
- implementation of Reading First in elementary grades

During the 2002 monitoring visit, there was concern that a modified day after-school program was used for a student, thus limiting his interaction with nondisabled peers. The modified day after-school program has not been used in the district since January 2003. The district continues to research avenues to fund an alternative class.

The district did not provide the results of a random review of student records to indicate that students in separate class placement have contact with nondisabled peers. The district has made improvement in the regular class placement of students with disabilities; however, separate class placement for students identified as EMH has increased by over 20% in the last two years. The district will be required to develop strategies to address separate class placement for students identified as EMH. The continuous improvement plan must be revised to include this area of need. Collaboration with Bureau staff is required in the revision of this plan.

Post-School Transition

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of post-school transition were related to the need for effective transition services for students with disabilities and the need for interagency agreements. Strategies implemented by the district to address this area included the following:

- establishment of a multi-district team to address transition needs
- implementation of community-based instruction (CBI) at the high school level

Glades and Hendry counties have established a team which meets monthly to address transition needs in both districts. Agencies are invited to attend the transition team's meetings. It was also reported that Mr. Aldrich, Glades District Superintendent, attends the monthly transition meetings.

CBI has been implemented at the high school. Interviews revealed that several community businesses and agencies are involved in the program. Students learn job skills while earning academic credits during their two-hour, daily shifts. Students are rotated through the various jobs so that they learn many different skills in the program.

The district has met all requirements in this area of the system improvement plan.

Transition from Part C to Part B Programs

The only finding from the 2002 report in the area of transition from Part C to Part B programs was that there was no formal system in place to identify students transitioning from Part C to Part B. In its status report, the district reported participation in a two-day training with Hendry County related to Part C to Part B transition. As a result of this training, a transition team was formed and meets monthly with early intervention program (EIP) providers. The district reported that all students needing transition to Part B have had those meetings prior to their third birthday. This was confirmed through special category record reviews.

The district has met all requirements in this area of the system improvement plan.

Parent Involvement

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of parent involvement.

Gifted Services

Findings from the 2002 report in the area of gifted included the lack of services to students identified as gifted and the lack of procedures to identify students as gifted. The district has implemented the following strategies to address the findings in this area:

- provided training to elementary staff to identify the characteristics of gifted children
- formed a gifted focus group consisting of parents, teachers, and administrators to address methods to provide services to students identified as gifted
- implemented gifted services at the elementary level

Twenty-seven students at the elementary level had been referred and evaluated for the gifted program by June 1, 2003. Of the 27 referred, 15 students qualified for the gifted program. The district has implemented a pull-out program for students who have been identified as gifted at the elementary level. The district currently does not offer gifted services to students at the high school level. The district will be required to address needs in the area of gifted in its continuous

improvement monitoring plan. The continuous plan must include strategies and goals related to the under-identification of gifted students and the development of a service delivery system for students at the high school level.

Student Record Reviews

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of student record reviews included several areas found to be systemic in nature. These areas included:

- lack of measurable annual goals and objectives
- inadequate short-term objectives and benchmarks
- inadequate present level of educational performance statements
- lack of frequency reported for accommodations/modifications
- lack of consideration of results of state and/or district assessments
- failure to identify the purpose of the meeting (transition)
- failure to invite appropriate team members
- transition components not in evidence at the DJJ facility

Strategies implemented to address the systemic findings related to IEPs included the following:

- school-level training on IEPs conducted by Bureau staff for ESE teachers, guidance counselors, and ESE director
- attendance at most IEP meetings by ESE director
- joint IEP training and workshop with representatives from Hendry County

The review of 11 student records, including two from the juvenile justice facility, during the verification visit indicated improvement in some areas of IEP compliance. All records indicated frequency of accommodations. Four of five records from the junior/senior high school indicated that the student was appropriately invited to attend the IEP meeting. The two records from the juvenile justice facility did not indicate that the student was invited; however, the student was in attendance. Ten of the 11 records reviewed had a majority of measurable annual goals; however, several of the individual goals were not measurable, indicating continued concern in this area.

Systemic findings include:

- inadequate short-term objectives and benchmarks (three of 11 records)
- inadequate present level of educational performance statements (four of 11 records)
- failure to identify transition as a purpose of the meeting (five of seven records)
- lack of consideration of results of state and/or district assessments (five of nine records)

The review of one matrix of services document for a student reported at the 254 cost factor was conducted. Information gained through IEP review, observations, and interviews confirmed the implementation of the services indicated on the matrix.

In its system improvement plan, the district identified the development of an ESE handbook for teachers as a strategy to address findings in the area of record and forms reviews. The district will be required to complete this strategy as part of its continued efforts to address these findings and provide a copy of the handbook to the Bureau with its December 2004 status report. Continued district monitoring of IEP compliance is required; additional follow-up training is suggested. The district will be required to address strategies to ensure IEP compliance in its continuous improvement monitoring plan. The district must conduct quarterly self-evaluations of the effectiveness of the strategies implemented, revise its training procedures as needed in

response to those evaluations, and report the results of those evaluations to the Bureau through the semi-annual report of progress.

District Forms Review

The 2002 final monitoring report had findings related to 12 of the district forms. All forms have been revised and resubmitted to the Bureau. Revisions have been approved on all forms with the exception of the *Notification of Change of FAPE*. This form must be revised and submitted to the Bureau within 15 days of the receipt of this report. In addition, a change in the Annual Notice of Confidentiality will be required at the next printing. In order to meet state requirement, the timeline which indicates that the district must respond to a parent request for access to records must be changed to be 30 days from the date of the parent request.

Special Category Record Reviews

Findings in the 2002 report in the area of special category record reviews were related to dismissal procedures, transition from Part C to Part B, temporary placement, and initial eligibility. During the verification visit, Bureau staff reviewed two records from each of the categories except temporary placement. There were no temporary placements in the district within the past year. All special category records were found to be in compliance. The district has met all requirements in this area.

Additional Compliance

In addition to monitoring categories related to the 2002 final report, the Bureau also conducted interviews related to the provision of speech and language services and counseling as a related service. Through interviews and record reviews, it appears that the speech and language needs of students are being met. The speech/language pathologist writes goals in the communication domain; however, classroom teachers implement the goals for students who have not met eligibility criteria for the program for students who are language impaired.

It appears that counseling is provided for students who demonstrate the need. Interviewees reported that the school counselors and the Hendry-Glades Mental Health Center provide these services. The review of student records confirmed the provision of counseling; two of the nine records indicated counseling as a related service.

Prior to the verification visit, Bureau staff reviewed data from many sources related to Glades County. The review of this data revealed a lack of oversight of the juvenile justice facility from the district. During the visit, it was confirmed that there is not a systematic method of providing oversight to the juvenile justice facility. The district will be required to develop and submit a plan to ensure compliance at the juvenile justice facility in its continuous improvement monitoring plan.

Summary

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services conducted a verification monitoring visit to Glades County District Schools during the week of January 19, 2004. The visit served to verify that the district had adequately met all requirements of the system improvement plan developed as a result of the random monitoring visit in May 2002.

Areas in which a need for continued improvement is required will be addressed in the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. The district's continuous improvement plan, with specific dates of completion designated by the Bureau, must be revised to incorporate these issues. The revised plan must be included with the district's continuous improvement status report submitted in June 2004 with subsequent status reports of these areas provided in December 2004 and June 2005. The areas demonstrating continued need are as follows:

- least restrictive environment
- gifted
- student records and forms
- oversight of juvenile justice facility

Through a district presentation by Kathleen Mathis and on-site visits, the district demonstrated improvement in all areas. While the district has completed the majority of strategies identified in the system improvement plan resulting from the 2002 monitoring report, the district must submit a final status report in June 2004 related to this plan. The revision to the continuous improvement plan will serve to ensure that the district will continue to meet the requirements of the provision of services to exceptional students.