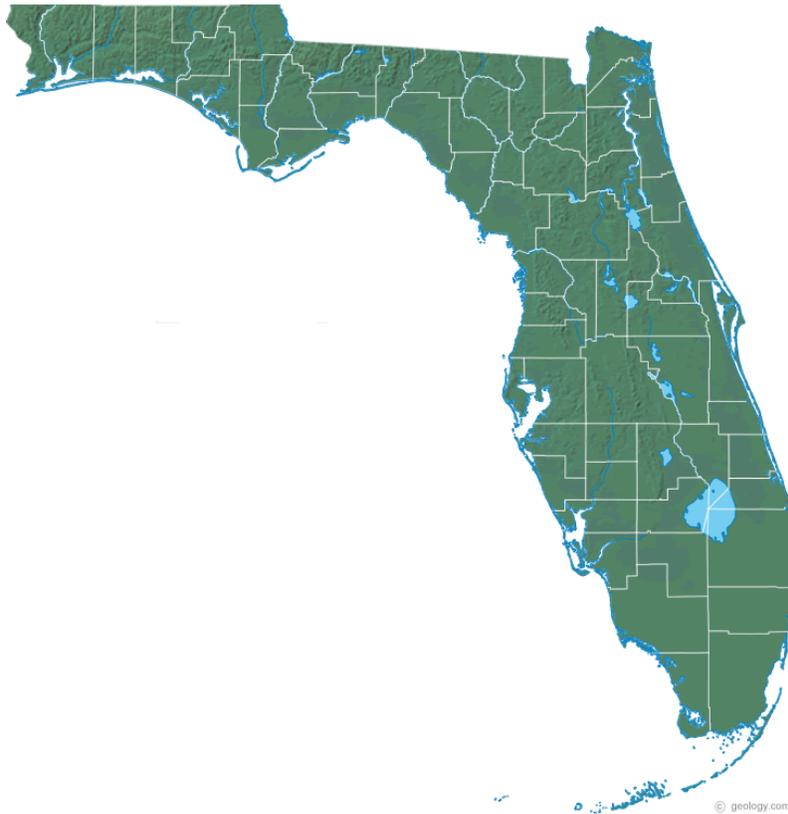


Jackson County School District

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring

Exceptional Student Education Programs

April 9, 2009



Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
Florida Department of Education

This is one of many publications available through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Florida Department of Education, designed to assist school districts, state agencies that support educational programs, and parents in the provision of special programs. For additional information on this publication, or for a list of available publications, contact:

Clearinghouse Information Center
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
Florida Department of Education
325 W. Gaines Street, Room 628
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

Telephone: (850) 245-0477

Fax: (850) 245-0987

E-mail: cicbiscs@fldoe.org

Web site: www.fldoe.org/ese

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May 26, 2009

Mr. Lee W. Miller
Superintendent of Schools
Jackson County School District
2903 Jefferson Street
Marianna, Florida 32446

Dear Superintendent Miller:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report of On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Programs* for Jackson County School District. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to our visit on April 9, 2009, including student record reviews, interviews with school and district staff, classroom observations, and the 2008-09 ESE compliance self-assessment conducted by the school district. The final report will be placed on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' Web site and may be viewed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/mon-home.asp>.

The Jackson County School District was selected for an on-site monitoring visit due to the number of students reported for weighted funding through the Florida Education Finance Program. Specifically, the district's rate for students reported at the 254 cost factor was 200% or more than the state rate for the 2008 Survey 3. Mr. Shawn Larkin, ESE Director, and his staff were very helpful during the Bureau's preparation for the visit and the on-site monitoring. In addition, Bureau staff members were welcomed and assisted by the principals and other staff at both schools that were visited. The Bureau's on-site monitoring activities did not identify any discrepancies. Therefore, no corrective action is required as a result of this visit.

BAMBI J. LOCKMAN
Chief

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Mr. Lee W. Miller
May 26, 2009
Page 2

Thank you for your continuing commitment to improve services for exceptional education for students in Jackson County. If there are any questions regarding this final report, please contact Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance, at (850) 245-0476, or via electronic mail at patricia.howell@fldoe.org.

Sincerely,



Bambi J. Lockman, Chief
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Enclosure

cc: Kenneth R. Griffin, School Board Chairman
Members of the School Board
Frank Bondurant, School Board Attorney
Shawn Larkin, ESE Director
Sharon Macaluso, Principal, Hope School
Jeff Bryant, Principal, Jackson Alternative School
Kim Komisar
Patricia Howell
Annette Oliver

**Jackson County School District
Final Report: On-Site Focused Monitoring**

April 9, 2009

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

Jackson County School District

**Final Report: On-Site Monitoring
April 9, 2009**

Table of Contents

Authority 1
Monitoring Process 1
 District Selection..... 1
 Matrix of Services..... 2
 On-Site Activities..... 3
 Monitoring Team 3
 Schools 3
 Data Collection..... 3
Results..... 3
Corrective Action..... 4
Technical Assistance..... 4
Glossary of Acronyms 5

Jackson County School District

On-Site Focused Monitoring April 9, 2009

Final Report

Authority

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all laws and rules (sections 1001.03(8) and 1008.32, Florida Statutes (F.S.)). In fulfilling this requirement, the Bureau conducts monitoring activities of the exceptional student education (ESE) programs provided by district school boards, in accordance with ss. 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and ESE programs; provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (section 300.1(d) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations, and districts are required to make a good faith effort to assist children with disabilities to achieve their stated goals and objectives in the least restrictive environment. In accordance with the IDEA, the Department is responsible for ensuring that its requirements are carried out and that each educational program for children with disabilities administered in the state meets the educational requirements of the state (34 CFR §§ 300.120, 300.149, and 300.600). The monitoring system reflects the Department's commitment to provide assistance, service, and accountability to school districts, and is designed to emphasize improved educational outcomes for students while continuing to conduct those activities necessary to ensure compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

Monitoring Process

District Selection

For the 2008-09 school year, the Bureau's ESE monitoring system, comprised of **basic** (Level 1 monitoring) and **focused** (Level 2 monitoring) self-assessments, and **on-site visits** (Level 3 monitoring), was established to ensure that school districts comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and state statutes and rules, while focusing on improving student outcomes related to State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators.

Decisions regarding the components of Level 1 and Level 2 monitoring for 2008-09 noncompliance were driven by: issues raised in recent Office of Program Policy and Governmental Accountability (OPPAGA) reports and legislative action regarding gifted education and matrix of services; issues addressed during the on-site monitoring of Florida's

ESE programs by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP); and the requirements of the SPP/Annual Performance Report (APR).

All districts were required to complete Level 1 activities. In addition, those districts that were newly identified for targeted planning or activities by the Bureau SPP indicator teams for one or more selected SPP indicators were required to conduct corresponding focused self-assessments. Districts selected for Level 3 on-site monitoring were also required to conduct Level 1 activities and Level 2 activities as applicable. Preliminary selection of districts for consideration for Level 3 monitoring was based on the following, and resulted in the identification of 22 districts:

- >150% of the state rate for students reported at the 254 and 255 **matrix** levels (state rate for 254: 4.84%; 255: 2.08%; 254/255 combined: 6.92%)
- >150% of the state rate for formal requests for **dispute resolution** (state rate: 0.12%)
- **Correction of noncompliance** not completed within the required timeline (one year from identification)

On-site monitoring was reserved for those situations that require classroom observations or staff interviews, and cannot adequately be addressed through student record desk reviews (e.g., IEP implementation; services being provided in accordance with the matrix). The list of 22 districts was further narrowed by raising the limit for the matrix of services to 200% of the state rate, and consideration was given to any districts that met the criteria for selection in more than one area (matrix, dispute resolution, and correction of noncompliance).

In a letter dated March 6, 2009, Jackson County School District's superintendent was informed that the Bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit related to the district's ESE programs, specifically related to matrix levels that were 200% or more of the state rate for 254.

Matrix of Services

Section 1011.62(e), F.S., describes the State of Florida's funding model for exceptional student education programs using basic, at-risk, support levels IV and V for exceptional students, and career Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) cost factors, and a guaranteed allocation for ESE programs. Exceptional education cost factors are determined by using a matrix of services to document the services that each exceptional student will receive. Within the matrix, five domains are used to group the types of services, and five levels are used to describe the nature and intensity of services within each domain. The total number of points is determined by adding together the scores for each domain and applicable special considerations and results in a rating of Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, or Level 5.

In order to generate funds at weighted cost factors of 254 or 255, a matrix of services must be completed at least once every three years by personnel who have received approved training. The nature and intensity of the services indicated on the matrix are to be consistent with the services described in each exceptional student's individual educational plan (IEP). School districts must ensure that each matrix of services document reflects the student's current services. If services change as a result of an IEP team decision, a new matrix of services document must be completed. If services do not change as a result of an IEP team meeting, and the matrix is less than three years old, the existing document may be reviewed and remain in effect. Matrix of services documents are required for McKay Scholarship students at all cost factor levels and may

be completed for students with disabilities receiving services above Level 1 in Department of Juvenile Justice facilities and charter schools.

On-Site Activities

Monitoring Team

On April 9, 2009, the following ESE Monitoring and Compliance Bureau staff conducted the on-site monitoring visit to review matrix of services documents for students with disabilities enrolled in Jackson County:

- Annette Oliver, Program Specialist (Team Leader)
- Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist
- Jill Snelson, Program Specialist

Schools

The following schools had the highest enrollment of students with matrix of services cost factors 254 and 255, and were therefore selected for on-site visits:

- Hope School
- Jackson Alternative School

IEPs and matrix of services documents from the following also were reviewed:

- Cottondale Elementary School
- Frank M. Golson Elementary School
- Marianna High School
- Homebound or Hospitalized Program

Data Collection

Monitoring activities included the following:

- District-level interviews: 4
- School-level interviews: 12
- Record reviews: 30
 - IEPs
 - Matrixes of Services
 - Supporting documentation of services
- Classroom observations: 12
- Case studies: 12

Results

The information reported here includes data collected through the activities of the on-site monitoring as well as the ESE compliance self-assessment.

1. There are approximately 1,230 ESE students served in the Jackson County School District. Of that number, approximately 130 students are reported for weighted funding at the 254 or 255 cost factors.
2. Matrix of services training is provided districtwide at least once annually and at specific school sites.

3. All matrix of services documents that were reviewed had been completed and reviewed by staff members trained in the process.
4. All matrix of services documents reviewed by the Bureau had been completed and/or reviewed within the past year by the school district.
5. The school district applies specific criteria when considering placement of students in Hope School and Jackson Alternative School, the two schools with the highest enrollment of students with matrix of services cost factors 254 and 255.
6. Since October 2008, eight students at Hope School and six students at Jackson Alternative School had services changes as a result of the students' IEP team meetings. Services changes included both increases and decreases. New matrix of services documents were completed for these students, with appropriate revisions to the matrix documents and reported funding level.
7. The school district provided sufficient documentation to support funding categories.

Corrective Action

None is required.

Technical Assistance

The following is a partial list of Bureau staff available for future technical assistance in the completion or review of matrix of services documents:

ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance (850) 245-0476

Kim Komisar, Ph.D., Administrator
Kim.Komisar@fldoe.org

Patricia Howell, Program Director
Monitoring and Compliance
Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org

Annette Oliver, Program Specialist
Jackson County School District's
Bureau-District Monitoring Liaison
Annette.Oliver@fldoe.org

Appendix:

Glossary of Acronyms

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

Glossary of Acronyms

APR	Annual Performance Report
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
ESE	Exceptional student education
FEFP	Florida Education Finance Program
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004
IEP	Individual educational plan
OPPAGA	Office of Program Policy and Governmental Accountability
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
SPP	State Performance Plan



**Florida Department of Education
Dr. Eric J. Smith, Commissioner**

ESE 312985A