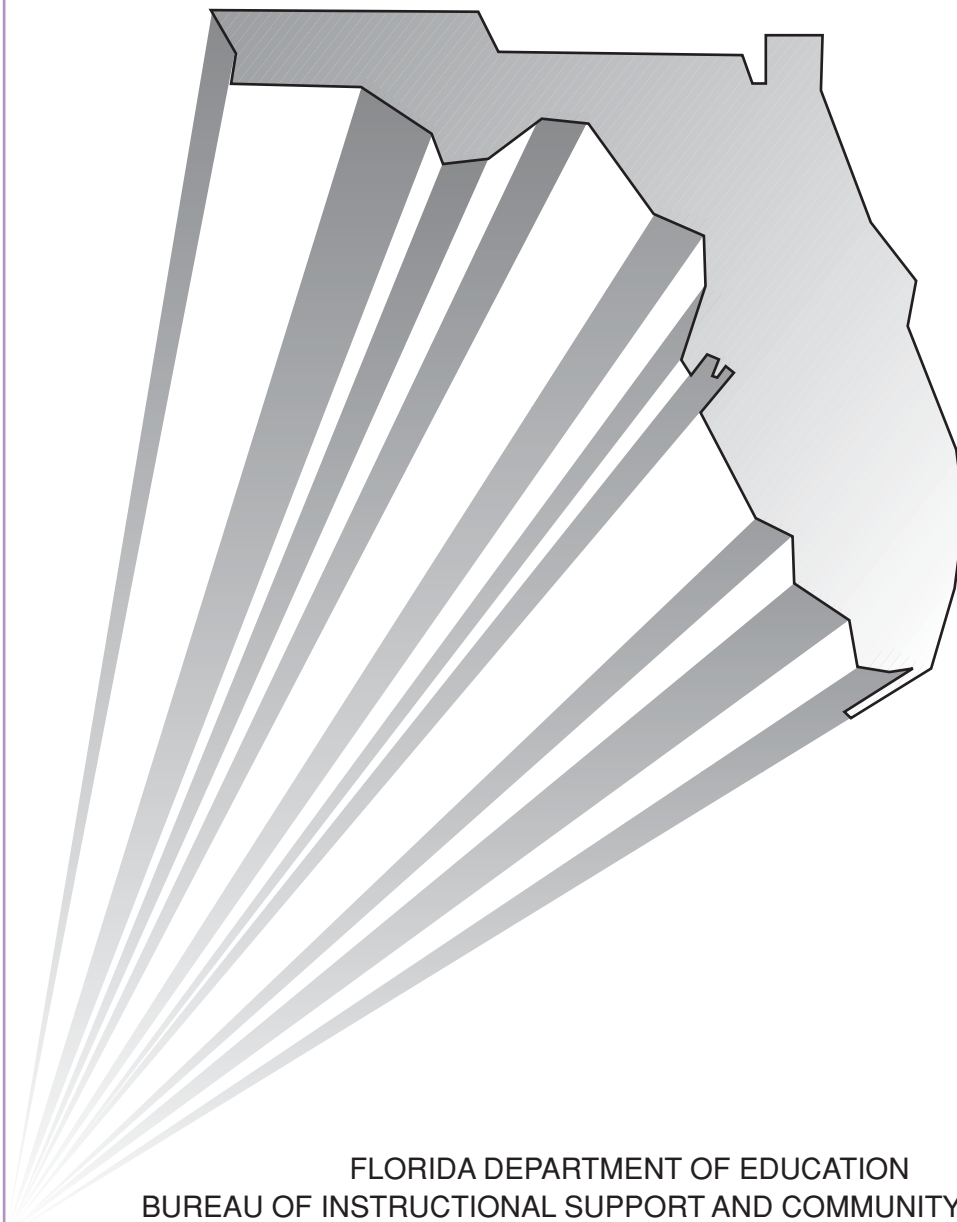


FINAL REPORT OF FOLLOW-UP MONITORING OF
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

JACKSON COUNTY

OCTOBER 7 - 8, 2003



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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November 3, 2003

Ms. Dianne Oswald, Director
Exceptional Student Education
Jackson County School District
P.O. Box 5958
Marianna, Florida 32447

Dear Ms. Oswald:

Thank you for your hospitality and professionalism during our recent follow-up monitoring visit, October 7-8, 2003. During the visit, the district provided a status report in response to the final monitoring report from the March 2001 focused 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.

The district has fulfilled the requirements of the system improvement plan resulting from the 2001 monitoring visit. You are not required to submit an additional status report. However, the district is required to address the findings related to the following topics addressed in the report:

- general supervision (IEP compliance)
- gifted eligibility

Strategies and outcome measures that address these areas of concern must be included in the continuous improvement monitoring plan status report to be submitted in December 2003.

We appreciate your ongoing efforts on behalf of exceptional students.

Sincerely,

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

Shan Goff

cc: Daniel Sims
Eileen Amy
Michele Polland

SHAN GOFF

K-12 Deputy Chancellor for Student Achievement

Jackson County Final Monitoring Report
Follow-up Monitoring Visit
October 7-8, 2003

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Jackson County School District Follow-Up Monitoring Visit October 7-8, 2003

During the week of October 6, 2003, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, conducted an on-site follow-up review of the exceptional student education (ESE) programs in Jackson County Public Schools. The primary purpose for conducting follow-up 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.

Jackson County was selected for monitoring in 2001 on the basis of the percent of students with disabilities who graduate with a standard diploma. The results of the follow-up visit are reported under the following categories or related areas that were included in the final monitoring report of the focused monitoring visit conducted March 26-29, 2001:

- standard diploma rate
- general supervision
- parent participation
- least restrictive environment
- gifted services
- child find
- transition from Part C to Part B programs
- secondary transition
- access to general curriculum

Site Visit

The primary on-site activity conducted as part of the follow-up monitoring visit was a demonstration by the district of the strategies implemented thus far through the system improvement plan developed as result of the 2001 focused 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 Jackson County included presentations related to the implementation of strategies identified in the system improvement plan based on categories from the final monitoring report. Dianne Oswald, Director, Exceptional Student Education, served as the coordinator and point of contact for the district during the monitoring visit. In addition, the following district staff participated in the presentation: Cathy Hedbawny, Kim Keene, Carolyn Baxter, Pam Sims, and Roberta Griffith. These participants should be commended for a presentation that was thorough, well prepared, and well executed; the written documentation verified the information presented orally.

In addition to the district presentation, the follow-up visit included visits to Riverside Elementary School, Grand Ridge School, Hope School, and the Center for the Advancement of Children's Learning (CACL) 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, matrix of services documents for students with disabilities, educational plans (EPs) for students identified as gifted, and the provision of counseling as a related service and speech and language services. School site visits included the following:

- interviews with nine selected school staff
- eight classroom visits
- reviews of four EPs for students identified as gifted
- reviews of 15 IEPs for students with disabilities
- reviews of two records for students identified as gifted who also were identified as having a disability (IEP and EP for both students)
- reviews of five matrix of services documents

Results

Standard Diploma

There were no findings of noncompliance from the 2001 monitoring report in the area of standard diploma. However, there were concerns in this area related to the decision-making process related to diploma option. It appeared that the diploma decision was based on the student's program or the school attended rather than individual needs. Strategies implemented to address the area of standard diploma included the following:

- IEP paperwork reviews conducted to address IEP concerns
- bi-monthly teacher work group meetings
- annual IEP review memo with detailed instructions provided to each ESE teacher
- every middle and high school ESE teacher provided with samples of Transition IEPs
- Diploma Decisions for Students with Disabilities booklet mailed to the parents of all 8th grade ESE students
- any student entering CACL currently pursuing a standard diploma remains on that track
- more students in grades 3–8 are being administered the FCAT
- eight ESE students were awarded waivers in order to receive a standard diploma

As a result of these efforts, tremendous improvement has been made in the area standard diploma. District staff presented evidence of an increase in the number of students at CACL who are currently on the standard diploma track. In 2001, all students enrolled in CACL were on a special diploma track while current data indicates that of 35 high school students enrolled, 12 are pursuing a standard diploma.

Interviews with school-level staff and reviews of student records at the visited schools verified the data presented by the district. The district has fulfilled all requirements of this category and should be commended in its continued efforts to increase the percent of students with disabilities who graduate with a standard diploma.

General Supervision

Findings from the 2001 monitoring report in the area of general supervision were related to IEP compliance. Strategies implemented by the district to address compliance in the area of IEPs included the following:

- Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) staff provided training to general education teachers on accommodations and modifications
- bi-monthly work group meetings held including ESE teachers from each school and district staff
- in-service provided to ESE teachers
- training provided on FCAT accommodations

The results of training were evident; the majority of the records reviewed were compliant in most areas identified as being noncompliant in the 2001 final report. Though improvement was noted, adequate present level statements and measurable annual goals continue to be an area of concern. The district will be required to address this area through its continuous improvement monitoring plan.

Parent Participation

Findings from the 2001 monitoring report in the area of parent participation included insufficient information to document that the concerns of parents were consistently considered in the development of the IEP. In addition, progress reports to parents did not describe progress toward annual goals nor did they describe the extent to which progress would enable students to meet annual goals. Strategies implemented by the district to address these areas include the following:

- Jackson Exceptional Parent Advisory Committee (JEPAC) meets quarterly
- local parent workshops are planned
- opportunities to attend regional Parent Workshops have been provided
- behavior training provided to all CACL parents
- district provided parents the opportunity to attend Family Café
- newsletters mailed to all ESE parents
- new IEP annual goal progress report is in effect

Documentation provided by the district prior to the on-site visit verified the completion of all activities identified in the district's system improvement plan. Record reviews at the selected school sites verified the documentation of parent concerns in the development of IEPs. The district has fulfilled all requirements of this category and should be commended in its continued efforts to increase parent participation.

Least Restrictive Environment

The only finding from the 2001 monitoring report in the area of least restrictive environment (LRE) was that there was inadequate documentation of the explanation of the extent to which students will not participate with nondisabled peers. According to the 2003 local education agency (LEA) profile, 40% 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 average of districts in the same enrollment group. In addition, 37% 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 significantly below the state average of 61%. Strategies implemented by the district to address this area included:

- encourage placement in the LRE through Quality Designs for Instruction (QDI)
- schools across the district use resource level
- schools with ESE pre-kindergarten and Headstart have ESE students included for most of the day

Record reviews indicated compliance in the area of explanation of the extent to which students will not participate with nondisabled peers. The district has completed all requirements in this area of the system improvement plan.

Gifted Services

Findings from the 2001 monitoring report in the area of gifted included eligibility determination based on partial scores without justification for individual students. There were also findings related to the EPs of students identified as gifted including lack of evaluation criteria, procedures, or schedules, lack of individualization, and lack of student outcomes related to the present level statements. The district has implemented the following strategies to address these issues as well as issues in the district continuous improvement monitoring plan:

- a gifted workshop addressing disproportionality was provided by PAEC to general education and gifted teachers, guidance counselors, and principals
- a workshop was provided for Student Services Director, school psychologists, and the ESE Director referencing the use of standard error of measurement (SEM) and partial scores
- updated information on eligibility and psychological evaluations was provided by Institute for Small and Rural Districts (ISR D) and NEFEC to school psychologists and program specialists (on all exceptionalities)
- school psychologists regularly attend the state and regional conferences and review quarterly newsletters to obtain updated gifted information

During the 2001 monitoring visit, record reviews indicated that students were routinely identified as gifted through the use of partial scores without justification statements. During this visit, Bureau staff reviewed the records of six students who were placed in the gifted program using partial scores within the past year. All of the records included justification statements for the use of partial scores. Current data provided by the district indicated that it has made great progress in reducing the number of students determined eligible through the use of partial scores. Of 35 students placed in the gifted program from August 8, 2002 through January 28, 2003, only seven were placed using a partial score. Justification statements were present for all seven. The district should be commended for its efforts in this area. As part of its continued efforts in this area, the district is required to include strategies related to the appropriate identification of students through the use of partial scores in its continuous improvement monitoring plan for students identified as gifted.

Child Find

There were no findings from the 2001 monitoring report in the area of child find.

Transition from Part C to Part B Programs

Although there were no findings from the 2001 monitoring report in the area of transition from Part C to Part B programs, the district has continued its efforts in this area. During the 2001

monitoring visit, only one school had inclusion for its prekindergarten (PreK) students. The program at that school has been replicated at all other district sites with PreK programs with the exception of one. Headstart and ESE PreK students participate in a wrap-around program in which ESE students benefit from all facets of the Headstart program while also receiving ESE services. At the center school there is no Headstart program and PreK students are bused to participate on a rotating basis with nondisabled peers at one of the general education schools. The district should be commended for its efforts in providing meaningful contact with nondisabled peers and should be encouraged to continue those efforts. All requirements of the system improvement plan have been satisfied.

Secondary Transition

There were no findings of noncompliance from the 2001 monitoring report. The district did, however, implement several strategies identified in the system improvement plan. Prior to the on-site visit, the district provided documentation of the completion of these strategies. The district has met all requirements in this area of the system improvement plan.

Access to the General Curriculum

The only findings from the 2001 monitoring report in the area of access to the general curriculum was that IEPs contained inadequate statements indicating how a student's disability affected his involvement in the general curriculum, lack of accommodations listed on the IEP, and insufficient documentation that the results of students' performance were considered in the development of the IEPs. In its status report prior to the visit, the district provided documentation of training for district and school-level staff related to these issues. On-site record reviews revealed compliance in this area. In addition, on-site visits revealed the use of general curriculum materials for most students with disabilities in ESE and general education classes. The district has met all requirements in this area of the system improvement plan.

Additional Compliance

In addition to monitoring categories related to the 2001 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. Classroom teachers routinely address students' language needs if students have not met eligibility criteria for a language disability.

In some cases, counseling is provided as a related service and indicated as such on the IEP. One school indicated that there is a counselor on site from Life Management Services (LMS) a non-profit organization. The school provides the counselor with an office. He is only able to provide services to students on Medicaid. For other students, the school makes referrals to LMS and counseling is provided; fees are based on parent income. The school reported that often parents and/or students refuse counseling. In addition, it was reported that social workers and school counselors routinely provide group and individual counseling to all students in the schools who have a need in this area. For these students, the service is not indicated on the individual IEP.

Summary

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services conducted a follow-up monitoring visit to Jackson County District Schools during the week of October 6, 2003. The visit served to verify that the district had adequately met all requirements of the system improvement plan developed as a result of the focused monitoring visit in March 2001. Through presentations and on-site visits, the district demonstrated improvement in all areas. All requirements have been met in the following categories:

- standard diploma
- parent participation
- least restrictive environment
- child find
- transition from Part C to Part B programs
- secondary transition
- access to general curriculum

Areas in which continued improvement is required must be addressed in the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. Strategies and outcome measures to address these areas must be reported in the status report submitted in December 2003. The areas demonstrating continued need are as follows:

- general supervision (IEP compliance)
- gifted eligibility