

FINAL REPORT:
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/SELF ASSESSMENT PLAN
VERIFICATION MONITORING
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

LEON COUNTY

NOVEMBER 7 - 10, 2005



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SERVICES

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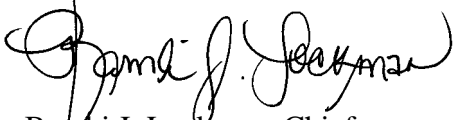
website: <http://myfloridaeducation.com/commhome/>

Superintendent Montford
January 30, 2006
Page 2

If my staff can be of any assistance as you develop and implement your new continuous improvement plans, 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 Leon County.

Sincerely,



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

Enclosure

cc: Sheila Costigan, School Board Chair
Members of the School Board
Jeffry Wahlen, School Board Attorney
School Principals
Ward Spisso, ESE Director
Eileen Amy
Evy Friend
Kim Komisar

Leon County School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring

**Monitoring Reporting Table 1:
Continuous Improvement Plans**

The table below includes information provided by the district on the activities conducted and outcomes achieved thus far through the continuous improvement process. In addition, information gleaned through the Bureau's monitoring activities regarding the district's implementation of these plans is provided.

Continuous Improvement Activities	Verification/Progress	Recommendations																					
Students with Disabilities: Disproportionality																							
<p>In developing its CIP for students with disabilities, Leon County incorporated its resolution agreement with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) resulting from OCR's compliance visit to the district in 1997. During this visit OCR focused on the policies and/or procedures which may contribute to the placement of a disproportionate number of African American children in the special program for students who are educable mentally handicapped (EMH). In the agreement, the district committed to the following:</p> <p><i>Referral and Intervention</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that appropriate interventions (length to be determined by the schools' intervention assistance teams) have been proven ineffective before a student is referred for evaluation. • Development of an annual assessment to 	<p><i>Percentage of EMH students who are African American:</i></p> <p>2001-02 Baseline: 81.4%</p> <p>2004-05 Goal: 69.2%</p> <p>2004-05 Rate: 81.1%</p> <p><i>Student Membership by Racial/Ethnic Group (2004-05):</i></p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">All Students</th> <th style="text-align: center;">EMH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>White:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">52%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">40%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">81%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hispanic:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3%</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Asian/PI:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2%</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Am. Ind.:</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><1%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Multi:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2%</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		All Students	EMH	White:	52%	17%	Black:	40%	81%	Hispanic:	3%	<1%	Asian/PI:	2%	<1%	Am. Ind.:	<1%	0%	Multi:	2%	<1%	<p>It is recommended that the district incorporate the following in its continuous improvement plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconvene the special task force to review all EMH records to ensure that the staffing teams follow State and district approved policies, procedures and practices. • Require two tests of cognitive functioning for transfer students. • Review random sample of initial placement records of EMH students annually.
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Continuous Improvement Activities	Verification/Progress	Recommendations
<p>on least restrictive environment (LRE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Placement in an ESE class will be considered only when it is demonstrated that education in the regular environment cannot be achieved satisfactorily with supplementary resources and services. – Placement at the district’s center school will only occur when less restrictive placements have proven to be ineffective. <p><i>Oversight/Monitoring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to all school based teachers and administrators on the policies, practices, and procedures developed pursuant the agreement with OCR. • Establish an advisory board to review, on an on-going basis, the programs, procedures, and policies of the district’s special education programs. • Collect and review eligibility data annually; identify and take action on schools with over-identification of minority students in EMH programs. <p>Using the methods identified in the OCR agreement, Leon County established a goal in its CIP for students with disabilities to decrease the overrepresentation of African Americans identified as EMH five percent per year from the baseline data reported in 2001-02.</p>	<p>Concerns involved the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student(s) found eligible EMH when psychological report recommends caution when interpreting results, single test of intellectual functioning administered, and/or split results on measures of intellectual functioning. • Behavioral concerns indicated in the record; evidence of interventions not included in the referral packet. • Reevaluations that address academic achievement but not intellectual functioning or adaptive behavior. • Student(s) found eligible for EMH with adaptive behavior scores in the moderate range. <p>An additional 51 records of EMH students were reviewed for placement decisions. For many the explanation of the need for removal from the general education setting was inadequate.</p>	

Continuous Improvement Activities	Verification/Progress	Recommendations																																										
Gifted Students: Performance on the General Statewide Assessment																																												
<p>In developing its CIP for gifted students the district reviewed the results from the 2002 FCAT and determined that gifted students in middle and high school who participated in the gifted program (i.e., were enrolled in gifted classes) had overall higher scores on the FCAT than those gifted students who did not participate in the program. Based on this information, the district set a goal to increase FCAT scores of gifted students by increasing the rate of participation of middle and high school students in the gifted program. Data from the Fall 2002 enrollment was established as the baseline. Normal Curve Equivalent scores (NCE) from the FCAT are used for comparison purposes. The strategies implemented included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with school-level administrators of middle and high schools to increase the number of gifted course offerings by five percent annually. • Work with school-level administrators of middle and high schools to encourage teachers to seek gifted endorsement. • Encourage participation in gifted courses by providing a candy bar to middle and high school students who enrolled in at least one gifted class. 	<p>Course Offerings:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="867 402 1467 570"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Baseline 2002-03</th> <th>Goal 2004-05</th> <th>Rate 2004-05</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Middle School:</td> <td>75</td> <td>86</td> <td>52</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High School:</td> <td>125</td> <td>144</td> <td>153</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Number of Gifted Students Enrolled in Gifted Courses (i.e., Participating):</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="867 708 1467 876"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Baseline 2002-03</th> <th>Rate 2004-05</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Middle School:</td> <td>520 (95%)</td> <td>488 (89%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High School:</td> <td>532 (71%)</td> <td>532 (60%)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>FCAT NCE Averages:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="867 976 1467 1328"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Baseline 2002-03</th> <th>NCE Avg. 2004-05</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="3">Reading:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Participating:</td> <td>80.5</td> <td>81.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-Participating:</td> <td>70.3</td> <td>74.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Math:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Participating:</td> <td>89.1</td> <td>90.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-Participating:</td> <td>78.6</td> <td>86.7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Baseline 2002-03	Goal 2004-05	Rate 2004-05	Middle School:	75	86	52	High School:	125	144	153		Baseline 2002-03	Rate 2004-05	Middle School:	520 (95%)	488 (89%)	High School:	532 (71%)	532 (60%)		Baseline 2002-03	NCE Avg. 2004-05	Reading:			Participating:	80.5	81.9	Non-Participating:	70.3	74.4	Math:			Participating:	89.1	90.6	Non-Participating:	78.6	86.7	<p>A review of the district's racial/ethnic breakdown indicates that 40% of the student population is African American and 8% of the gifted students are African American.</p> <p>It is recommended that the district revise its continuous improvement plan to target disproportionate representation of minority students in the gifted program.</p> <p>If the decision is made to continue to address FCAT performance of gifted students, additional strategies must be developed that more directly impact instruction in areas assessed by the FCAT (e.g., reading; math; science).</p>
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Continuous Improvement Activities	Verification/Progress	Recommendations
	<p>Verification of the activities conducted by the district was obtained through interviews, record reviews, observations, and the case study process. Staff reported that the district has had little success in this area; while the number of course offerings at the high school level has increased, the number at the middle school level has decreased. In addition, they reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-participating gifted students showed greater improvement in FCAT scores than those participating in the gifted program. • The number of students eligible for the gifted program has decreased from 2,254 in 2002-03, to 1,959 in 2004-05. • The primary focus of the district’s gifted program is through enrichment activities provided at the Academic Resource Center (ARC) or in the students’ home school. • The increase in the number of pre-International Baccalaureate (IB) courses available at the middle school and the decrease in the number of “highly qualified” teachers might account for the decrease in student participation in the district’s gifted programs. 	

Leon County School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring

Monitoring Reporting Table 2: Compliance Reviews

The table below includes findings from the Bureau’s review of district procedures related to the provision of services to exceptional education students. The results are presented topically, and the related regulatory citations are included (see appendix D). The topics represent selected processes and procedures targeted by the Bureau (e.g., transition from school to post school living; counseling as a related service).

Standard/Citation	Findings	Supporting Evidence	Concerns
Counseling Services			
34 CFR §300.24 Related services. Rule 6A-6.03016(4) (d), FAC, Special Programs for Students Who Are Emotionally Handicapped	No findings of noncompliance in this area.		Some school- and district-based ESE personnel were not aware of the process to follow if an IEP team were to determine that a given student required counseling as a related service, and believed that parents might be asked to pay for such services if they were to be provided by an outside agency.
Communication Services			
34 CFR §300.346(a)(2) (iv) Development, review,	No findings of noncompliance in this		

Standard/Citation	Findings	Supporting Evidence	Concerns
and revision of the IEP. Rule 6A-6.03028(6), FAC, Development of Individual Educational Plans for Students with Disabilities	area.		
School to Post-School Transition Services			
34 CFR §300.344(b) IEP team. Rule 6A-6.03028(3)-(4), FAC, Development of Individual Educational Plans for Exceptional Students	Transition is not included on IEP team meeting notice for all students ages 14 and older. Representatives of agencies are not invited to the IEP team meetings for all students ages 16 and over when appropriate.	<i>Records:</i> Transition was not included as a purpose on the meeting notices for three of 11 IEP meetings (27%) for students ages 14 and older. Two of three transition IEPs (66%) for students who appeared to have a current need for agency participation did not have agencies invited to the IEP meeting.	All of the students who participated in the focus group discussions reported that they had not been informed of the FCAT waiver as an option if they were unable to achieve a passing score on the test.
Gifted Services			
Section 1003.57, F.S. Exceptional Student Instruction Section 1003.01(3)(a), F.S. Definitions. Rule 6A-6.030191(5)(a), FAC, Development of Educational Plans for	EPs for gifted students at Rickards H.S. who do not participate in the IB program are not being implemented. EPs for gifted students at Belle Vue M.S. who do not attend ARC are not	<i>Records:</i> Five of five gifted students at Rickards H.S. who were not participating in the IB program or attending ARC, had EPs that were not being implemented. Two of four students at Belle Vue M.S. who do not attend ARC have EPs that are not being implemented.	There are limited gifted services available for students who do not participate in the enrichment program through ARC. There are limited core academic classes for

Standard/Citation	Findings	Supporting Evidence	Concerns
Exceptional Students Who Are Gifted	being implemented.	<i>Interviews:</i> Three of four (75%) teachers of the gifted reported that parents discourage their children from participating in ARC because attending this program results in the student missing core content class work for which they remain responsible.	students who are gifted.
Charter Schools			
34 CFR §300.241(a) Treatment of charter schools and their students. 34 CFR §300.312(a) Children with disabilities in public charter schools.	No findings of noncompliance in this area.		
Matrix of Services			
S. 1011.62(1)(e), F.S. Funding model for exceptional student education programs.	Five matrix of services documents require correction due to inaccurate reporting; this represents a systemic finding.	<i>Records:</i> Five of nine IEPs/matrix of services documents for students reported at the 254 level were not reported accurately.	
Student Record Reviews – IEPs; EPs; Special Categories			
34 CFR §300.340-300.350 Individualized Educational Programs	One IEP was not current at the time of review and during the most recent	188 IEPs were reviewed, in part or in whole. 34 EPs were reviewed, in part or in whole.	The checklist used to explain the extent to which students are removed from

Standard/Citation	Findings	Supporting Evidence	Concerns
<p>Rule 6A-6.03028, FAC, Development of Individual Educational Plans for Exceptional Students.</p> <p>Rule 6A-6.030281, FAC, Development of Services Plans for Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Private Schools by Their Parents and Provided with Specially Designed Instruction by the Local School Board.</p> <p>Rule 6A-6.030191, FAC, Development of Educational Plans for Exceptional Students Who Are Gifted.</p> <p>Rule 6A-6.0331, FAC, Identification and Determination of Eligibility of Exceptional Students for Specially Designed Instruction.</p>	<p>FTE reporting period, resulting in a funding adjustment and the requirement to reconvene an IEP team.</p> <p>For two IEPs the majority of the annual goals were not measurable, resulting in the requirement to reconvene IEP teams.</p> <p>For one IEP there were findings of noncompliance related to the present level of educational performance, goals, objectives or benchmarks, and/or services that resulted in the requirement to reconvene the IEP team.</p>	<p>31 special category records were reviewed. A detailed description of the record reviews was provided to the district via electronic mail on December 8, 2005 and in a letter dated December 21, 2005; the results are included in more detail in this report as appendix E.</p>	<p>the general education setting does not allow for sufficient information to be provided (i.e., some options represent noncompliant justification; the same options are used to justify a wide range of placements for students with widely different needs and behaviors.</p> <p>In two cases there was unreasonable delay in the time from the signing of consent for testing or reevaluation, and the eligibility staffing, ranging from 8 to 18 months.</p>

Standard/Citation	Findings	Supporting Evidence	Concerns
6A-6.0334, FAC, Temporary Assignment of Transferring Exceptional Students.			
District Forms			
34 CFR §300.503 Prior written notice by the public agency; content of notice. 34 CFR §300.347 Content of the IEP Rule 6A-6.03028, FAC, Development of Individual Educational Plans for Exceptional Students	Twenty forms require revisions to meet compliance.	A detailed description of the forms review was provided to the district in a letter dated October 11, 2005.	

Appendix A:

LEA Profile

Appendix B:
ESE Monitoring Team Members

Appendix C:
Survey Results

Appendix D:
Regulatory Citations

Appendix E:
Student Record Reviews

Appendix F:
Glossary of Acronyms

