

Liberty County School District

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring  
Exceptional Student Education Programs

December 7–8, 2011



Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

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February 8, 2012

Dr. Sue Summers, Superintendent  
Liberty County School District  
P.O. Box 429  
501 South Calhoun Street  
Bristol, Florida 32321-0429

Dear Superintendent Summers:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report: On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs* for the Liberty County School District. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site monitoring visit to your district on December 7–8, 2011. Those information sources included student record reviews, interviews with district and education staff at the facilities, and classroom observations. The final report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

The Liberty County School District was selected for an on-site visit for a follow-up review of students in selected Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities who have matrix cost factors of 254 and 255. Ms. Gay Lewis, Director of Instruction, and Ms. Carla Green, Education Director, Twin Oaks Juvenile Justice, Inc., were very helpful during the Bureau's preparation for the visit and during the on-site visit. In addition, the program directors, educational staff, and other staff members at each of the facilities welcomed and assisted the monitoring team during the on-site visit. *The Bureau's on-site monitoring activities did not identify any matrix discrepancies; however, noncompliance related to individual educational plan (IEP) development was identified for one standard in two of the student records reviewed. Corrective action is required.*

CATHY BISHOP, INTERIM CHIEF  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Dr. Sue Summers  
February 8, 2012  
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Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in DJJ facilities within Liberty County School District. If there are any questions regarding this final report, please contact Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance, at (850) 245-0476 or via email at [Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org](mailto:Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org).

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_



Cathy Bishop, Interim Chief  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Enclosure

cc: Gay Lewis  
Carla Green  
Karen Denbroeder  
Patricia Howell  
Jacqueline Roumou

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# Liberty County School District

## Final Report: On-Site Monitoring Exceptional Student Education Programs December 7–8, 2011

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# **Liberty County School District**

## **Final Report: On-Site Monitoring Exceptional Student Education Programs December 7–8, 2011**

### **Authority**

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (Bureau), 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 exceptional student education (ESE) laws and rules related to sections 1001.03(8) and 1008.32, Florida Statutes (F.S.). One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (s. 300.1(d) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]). The Bureau is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA and the educational requirements of the State are implemented (34 CFR §300.149(a)(1) and (2)).

In fulfilling this requirement, the Bureau monitors ESE programs provided by district school boards in accordance with sections 1001.42, 1003.57, and 1003.573, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and ESE services; provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. The monitoring system is designed to facilitate improved educational outcomes for students while ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

### **Monitoring Process**

#### **Background Information**

In a letter dated September 6, 2011, the Superintendent of Liberty County School District was informed that the Bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for a follow-up review of students in selected Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities that have matrix cost factors of 254 and 255 for the 2011–12 school year.

#### **On-Site Activities**

##### ***Monitoring Team***

On December 7–8, 2011, the following Bureau staff members conducted the on-site monitoring visit:

- Jacqueline Roumou, Compliance Specialist (Team Leader)
- Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance
- Lisa Robinson, Program Specialist, Juvenile Justice Education

### ***DJJ Facilities***

DJJ facilities visited included the following:

- Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp
- Juvenile Unit Specialized Treatment – Liberty Wilderness

### ***Data Collection***

Monitoring activities at the two DJJ facilities included the following:

- Record reviews – 15 students
- Observations – 7 classrooms
- District administrator interview – 1 participant
- Facility administrator interviews – 2 participants
- Teacher interviews – 5 participants

### ***Review of Records***

The district was asked to provide the following documents for each student selected for review:

- Current individual educational plan (IEP)
- Functional behavioral assessment (FBA)/behavioral intervention plan (BIP), if any
- Student Need Accurate Knowledge Enforcers (SNAKE) behavior intervention point sheet(s)
- Therapy log(s)
- Discipline record, including documentation of manifestation determination meetings, if applicable
- School, teacher, and student schedules
- Lesson plans
- Class schedule
- Attendance records

## **Results**

Section 1011.62(1)(e), F.S., describes the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) funding model for exceptional student education programs, including basic, support levels IV and V for exceptional students, career 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. This model is designed to provide funds to a school district for the services that the district pays for or provides. If the district has a cost-sharing arrangement for services, the district may not report them for weighted funding. In addition, the nature and intensity of the services indicated on the matrix are to be consistent with the services described in the exceptional student's IEP. If a student with a disability is enrolled in a special program (e.g., dropout prevention program) and requires a service that is routinely provided to all students in that program, including nondisabled students, the district cannot claim weighted funding for that service via the matrix.

The IEPs reviewed supported the services reported on the matrix of services documents and no discrepancies were identified between the services on the IEPs and the services provided.

## **Commendations**

As part of the on-site activities, the monitoring team had an opportunity to conduct student case studies, observe classrooms, and interview educational staff regarding the services provided to students with disabilities in the schools visited. The team noted that each of the facilities was orderly and well-organized. Professionalism of school staff and their commitment to students was evident. There was collaboration among staff members from different areas and school programs, and administrators provided strong leadership and support to staff.

In addition, the on-site team identified the following commendable programs and services in the individual facilities visited:

- Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp:
  - The facility was clean, attractive, and well-maintained.
  - There was a positive working environment for program staff members.
  - The teachers appeared to be highly motivated and demonstrated compassion, care, and genuine concern for the students.
  - Student-to-teacher ratios were very low.
  - Teachers had an extensive knowledge about the students' individual needs and maintained a positive classroom atmosphere in which students were actively engaged in the learning process.
- Juvenile Unit Specialized Treatment – Liberty Wilderness:
  - Interactions between staff and students were very positive.
  - Academic instructors had extensive knowledge of the students' individual needs.
  - The work programs allowed students to develop skills in building construction and welding that may lead to employment opportunities upon the students' return to their communities.
  - The students were able to participate in extracurricular activities such as field trips and parade float and houseboat construction.
  - Instructors demonstrated dedication to meeting the educational needs of their students.

## **Concern**

Since student enrollment at both facilities tends to change frequently, the IEP teams tend to maintain the same diploma option and statewide assessment decisions as reflected on the students' previous IEPs.

## **Recommendations**

- Each IEP team should carefully consider the student's present levels of performance and rate of progress in relation to the diploma option decision and change if appropriate.

- The IEP teams are responsible for determining whether students with disabilities will be assessed with the general statewide assessment or with the Florida Alternate Assessment based on criteria outlined in Rule 6A-1.0943(4), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). In order to facilitate informed and equitable decision making, IEP teams should utilize the *Assessment Participation Checklist* at <http://www.fldoe.org/asp/pdf/AAChecklist2.pdf> when determining the appropriate assessment. Additional information is included in the technical assistance paper *Statewide Assessment for Students with Disabilities*, which may be accessed at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5831/dps-2010-92.pdf>.

## Findings of Noncompliance

A finding of noncompliance was identified for one requirement.

The IEP includes measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the student's needs that result from the disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and meet the student's other needs that result from the disability. Benchmarks or short-term objectives should be included for students with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards or any other student with a disability as determined by the IEP team. (34 CFR §300.320(a)(2))

- In two of 15 records reviewed, there was a mismatch between the present level information for math and the benchmarks for math.

## Corrective Action

**No later than March 9, 2012**, the Liberty County School District must reconvene the IEP teams to correct the noncompliance for the two students for whom there was a mismatch between the present level information and the benchmarks. With the agreement of the parent and the district, an IEP may be amended without a meeting.

In addition, **no later than January 9, 2013**, the district must demonstrate 100 percent compliance with the standard in question through review of a random sample of five IEPs developed after December 8, 2011.

*Note: In accordance with the reporting requirements of the Annual Performance Report for the State Performance Plan, this item will be counted as a finding of noncompliance related to IEP development. Documentation verifying completion of all components of the corrective action must be received in accordance with the timelines established above, but in no case longer than one year from the date (January 9, 2012) of the corrective action letter in order for the district to comply with the requirements of SPP indicator 15 (timely correction of noncompliance).*

## Technical Assistance

Specific information for technical assistance, support, and guidance regarding IEP development can be found in the *Exceptional Student Education Compliance Manual 2011–12* available on the General Supervision Website (GSW).

### Bureau Contacts

The following is a partial list of Bureau staff available for technical assistance:

#### **Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems**

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

**Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

BIP	Behavioral intervention plan
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BRIC	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Resource and Information Center
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
ESE	Exceptional student education
F.A.C.	Florida Administrative Code
FBA	Functional behavioral assessment
FEFP	Florida Education Finance Program
F.S.	Florida Statutes
GSW	General Supervision Website
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
SNAKE	Student Need Accurate Knowledge Enforcers



**Florida Department of Education**  
*Gerard Robinson, Commissioner*

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