

FINAL REPORT OF VERIFICATION MONITORING OF
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

MADISON COUNTY

JANUARY 14 - 16, 2004



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

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telephone: (850) 245-0477

FAX: (850) 245-0987

Suncom: 205-0477

e-mail: cicbiscs@fldoe.org

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

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April 27, 2004

Mr. Bill Roberts, Superintendent
Madison County School District
312 Northeast Duval St.
Madison, Florida 32340

Dear Superintendent Roberts:

Thank you for your hospitality and professionalism during our recent verification monitoring visit on January 15-16, 2004. During the visit, the district provided a status report in response to the final monitoring report from the April 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 submit additional data related to the spring 2004 administration of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Based on that data, the district will revise its continuous improvement monitoring plan in its June 2004 report to incorporate strategies to continue to increase the participation rate in statewide assessment for students with disabilities.

We appreciate your ongoing efforts on behalf of exceptional students.

Sincerely,

Michele Polland

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

cc: Ramona Guess
Eileen Amy
Kim Komisar

MICHELE POLLAND
Acting Chief
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

**Madison County Final Monitoring Report
Verification Monitoring Visit
January 14-16, 2004**

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Madison County School District Verification Monitoring Visit January 14-16, 2004

During the week of January 12, 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 Madison 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.

Madison County was selected for monitoring in 2002 on the basis of its rate of participation in statewide assessments for students with disabilities. 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 focused monitoring visit conducted April 8-12, 2002:

- testing and instructional accommodations
- access to the general education curriculum
- preparation of students to take the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)
- staff knowledge and training
- decision making process
- routine assessments
- stakeholder opinions related to the key indicator
- student record reviews
- district form 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 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. Ramona Guess, Coordinator, Exceptional Student Education, served as the point of contact for the district during the monitoring visit. In addition, the following district staff participated in the presentation: Gladney Cherry, Janis Bunting, Annie Barfield, and Rhonda Gailbraith. 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 verification visit included visits to Madison County Central School, Madison County High School, and the Greenville Hills Academy, a juvenile justice facility. The purpose of these visits was to validate information provided during the district presentation and to conduct 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 language services. School site visits included:

- interviews with 11 selected school staff
- reviews of 16 IEPs for students with disabilities
- reviews of two matrices of services documents

Results

Testing and Instructional Accommodations

During the district’s presentation, the staff described the efforts made to increase the participation rate of students with disabilities in the FCAT. The district has revised its IEP to incorporate the FCAT exemption criteria found in state statute, and has held workshops with district and school staff, and parents, on the importance of students with disabilities participating in the standard curriculum and in the assessment process.

Despite these efforts, Madison County continues to have a relatively low participation rate in statewide assessment. A comparison of the percentage of students who were reported as participating in the FCAT in fourth, eighth, and tenth grades for the 2000-01 and 2002-03 school years is given below:

	2000-01	2002-03		2000-01	2002-03
<u>Reading</u>			<u>Math</u>		
Grade 4	70%	77%	Grade 5	68%	73%
Grade 8	55%	54%	Grade 8	51%	54%
Grade 10	41%	32%	Grade 10	41%	30%

The staff did report that the number of students taking alternate assessment had decreased from 140 in March of 2003 to 77 in January of 2004, and the expectation was that 20-25 IEP meetings would be held through February 2004, during which IEP teams would review the exemption criteria as required under state statute. It is anticipated that some students currently scheduled for alternate assessment will be found ineligible for exemption from FCAT assessment.

Interviews with teachers and guidance counselors at the school sites found that they are all now aware of the criteria for exemption from the FCAT, and are aware of the emphasis on having students with disabilities participate in the FCAT. Most expressed surprise at the actual data, and several questioned the validity of the numbers. A review of 16 IEPs found the decision-making regarding participation in statewide assessment to be appropriate, with four students who met exemption criteria scheduled to take alternate assessment.

Based on the assessment data reported for 2002-03, there was also a concern that a significant number of students were not being assessed, particularly at grade 10. With an enrollment of 50 students in that grade, 16 were reported as participating in FCAT, and 18 reported as participating in alternate assessment, leaving 16 students unaccounted for. One suggestion was that there were some 10th grade students who had passed the FCAT but due to lack of credits had been retained in 10th grade. There was also a concern that the data from some of the students at Greenville Hills Academy may not have been reported.

The district will be required to provide additional data regarding the number of students participating in FCAT and alternate assessment following the spring 2004 administration. The district will also be required to develop additional strategies to improve the rate of participation in statewide assessment to be included in its continuous improvement plan status report in June 2004. In addition, the district shall review its procedures for tracking and reporting alternate assessment, including procedures at the Greenville Academy, and provide a report of its findings by June 2004.

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of accommodations were related to the provision of all FCAT testing accommodations to all students with disabilities regardless of which accommodations were listed on the individual student's IEP. Strategies implemented to address this concern included:

- inservice for teachers and school guidance counselors
- a listing of FCAT accommodations for ESE students compiled for school guidance counselors and ESE teachers

The district conducted a review of 20 randomly sampled students and found 100% compliance between the accommodations received during the FCAT testing, and the accommodations listed on these students' IEPs. Interviews with school staff confirmed that these lists are reviewed by ESE teachers and staffing specialists, and are placed in notebooks for the guidance counselors to use during FCAT testing.

The district has completed all accommodations strategies required in the system improvement plan and will submit a final status report in this area in June 2004.

Access to the General Education Curriculum

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of access to the general education curriculum.

Preparation of Students to Take the FCAT

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of preparation of students to take the FCAT.

Staff Knowledge and Training

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of staff knowledge and training.

Decision-Making

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of decision-making.

Routine Assessments

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of routine assessments.

Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Key Indicator

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of stakeholder opinions were based on the reports from teachers and parents indicating that they feared that the FCAT assessment would be

detrimental to the ESE students and saw little value in having the ESE students take the FCAT. It was reported that parents often requested that their child be exempted from the testing. The strategies implemented by the district to address these concerns included:

- inservice for regular education and ESE teachers to stress the importance of FCAT participation for students with disabilities
- PASSport to Success (Parents Assuring Student Success) training for parents prior to the FCAT administration to eliminate the fears about FCAT and stress the importance of this assessment for students with disabilities
- provision of hands-on activities for parents to give them tools to work at home with their students

The district staff explained that in the workshops the emphasis was on “demystifying” the FCAT to eliminate the fears of the teachers and parents. Interviews at the school sites confirmed that there was an awareness of the importance of students with disabilities participating in the FCAT assessment, and the staff reported that parents had a better grasp of why the students were being assessed.

The district has completed all strategies related to stakeholder opinions that were required in the system improvement plan and will submit a final status report in this area in June 2004.

Student Record Reviews

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of IEPs indicated five areas of noncompliance. These areas included:

- inadequate present level of performance
- lack of measurable goals
- lack of correspondence between goals and needs identified in the present level of performance
- inadequate short-term objectives
- lack of correlation between present level of performance, annual goals, and services on the IEP

The district addressed compliance in the area of IEPs by scheduling an IEP compliance workshop for all ESE teachers which was conducted by Bureau staff. The district reviewed 10 randomly selected IEPs and found 90% met the compliance standards.

A current review of 16 IEPs found that 2 did not have measurable annual goals, including one for a student at Greenville Hills Academy. This will require that the IEP teams reconvene to address the goals. The district was given the names of these students in a letter dated February 11, 2004. The other areas of IEP concern were adequately addressed. It was noted that two of the IEPs from Greenville Academy had comments under short term objectives stating that the student would “continue to work on previous objectives.”

A review of matrices of services documents for two students reported at the 254 and 255 cost factors was conducted. Information gained through the IEP review, observations and interviews confirmed the implementation of services for the student reported at the 255 matrix cost factor. However, the matrix review of the other student indicated that the services he currently receives

as a result of a school change do not support with the matrix cost factor of 254. The district will be required to correct the data for that student through the Automated Student Information System database for survey 2 for the 2003-04 school year. The name and student number of that student was also provided in the aforementioned letter.

It is considered that the district has met the requirements for this area. It is recommended that the district develop strategies in its continuous improvement monitoring plan to address the continued need for provision of technical assistance for teachers in the areas of IEP compliance and matrix completion. The district will submit a final status report in this area in June 2004.

District Forms Review

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report indicated that there were two forms that required revision. These forms were revised and the revisions were approved in January, 2003.

Additional Compliance

In addition to addressing the 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. Interviews with school staff confirmed that the classroom teachers address the language needs of students through academic and social goals on the IEP. Teachers reported that the curriculum in Madison County Schools is strongly language based and that consultation between general education teachers, ESE teachers and speech/language pathologists also supports students who demonstrate needs in communication. At Greenville Hills Academy, many of the students are reported to have language needs, and both teachers indicated that they address language extensively throughout the day, and most intensively through the language arts curriculum. As a result, they reported that they do not routinely document student communication needs on the IEP. As teachers have identified student needs in these cases, it is recommended that communication goals be included in the IEP to address these needs.

District and school staff in the Madison County School District reported that counseling is provided based on the needs of students, and is available to all students. Counselors from the Apalachee Mental Health Center, Florida State University, and the Crisis Intervention Resource Center are available to provide individual, group and classroom counseling in the schools. For students with disabilities, the counseling is provided as a related service and is indicated as such on the IEP. At Greenville Hills Academy, the interviewees reported that counseling was an expected part of the program and was provided by the staff which includes the teachers, clinical coordinators, and cottage counselors. Treatment teams convene to address student needs and concerns. The staff at the facility reported that, since all students (exceptional and general education) have access to counseling services on an as needed basis, only in the most severe cases would the need for counseling be included on the IEP, either through goals or as a separate service. As treatment teams have identified student needs in these cases, it is recommended that counseling goals be included in the IEP to address these needs.

Summary

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services conducted a verification monitoring visit to Madison County Public Schools during the week of January 12, 2004. Through presentations and on-site visits, the district demonstrated that requirements have been met in the following categories:

- testing accommodations
- stakeholder opinions
- records reviews
- district forms reviews

The district continues to have a relatively low rate of participation of students with disabilities in statewide assessments and will be required to provide the Bureau with additional data following the spring 2004 assessment. Based on that data, the rate of participation of students with disabilities in statewide assessments will be addressed in the district's continuous improvement plan. Strategies and outcome measures to address the rate of participation are to be reported in the status report submitted in June, 2004.