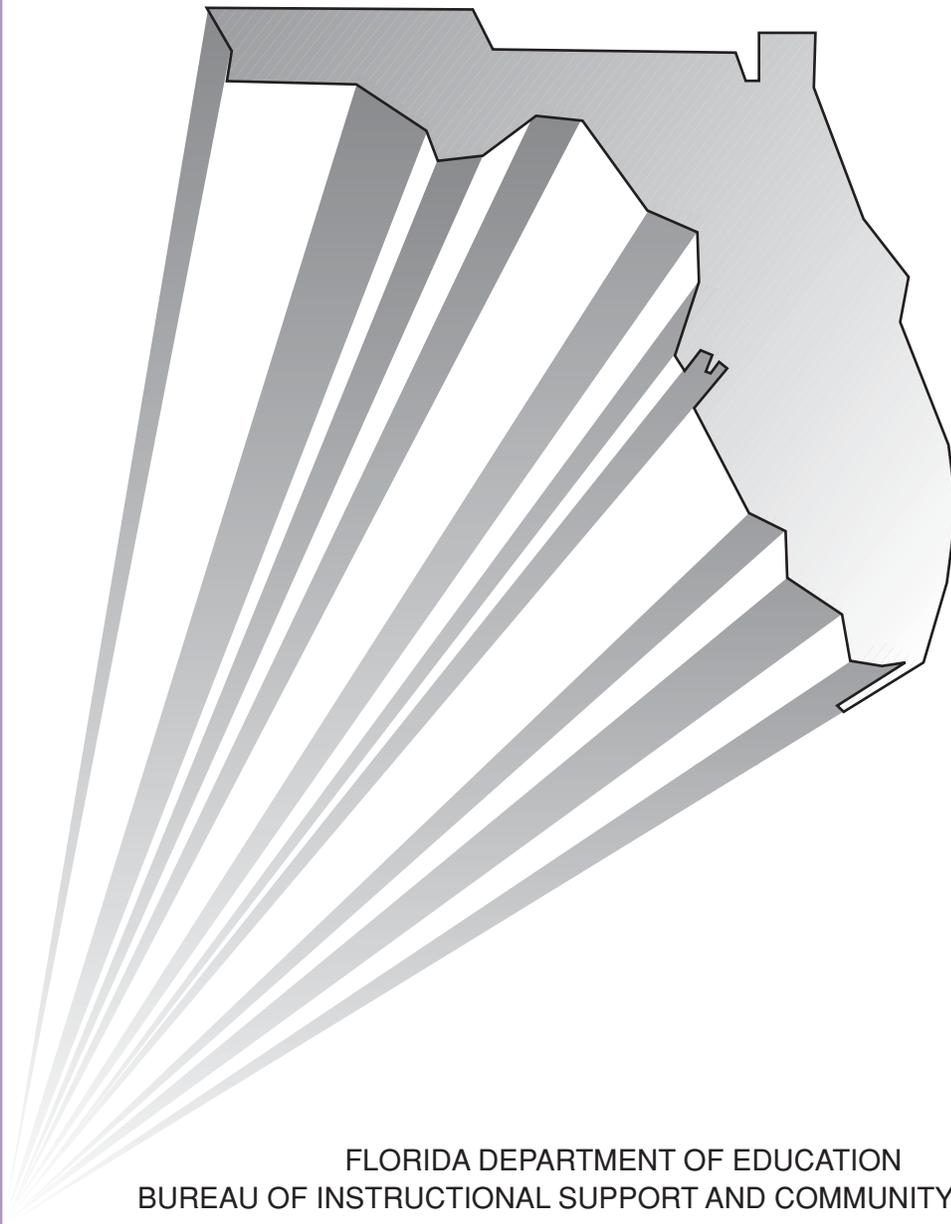


FINAL REPORT OF FOCUSED MONITORING OF  
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

# MARION COUNTY

SEPTEMBER 8-11, 2003



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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March 10, 2004

Mr. James Yancey, Superintendent  
Marion County School District  
P.O. Box 670  
Ocala, Florida 34478-0670

Dear Superintendent Yancey:

We are pleased to provide you with the Final Report of Focused Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs in Marion County. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information including student record reviews; interviews with school and district staff; information from focus groups; and parent, teacher, and student survey data from our visit on September 8-11, 2003. The report includes a system improvement plan outlining the findings of the monitoring team. The final report will be placed on the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services' website and may be viewed at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm>.

Bureau staff have worked with Bruce Foster, ESE Director, and his staff to develop a system improvement plan including the required system improvement measures, including strategies and activities to address the areas of concern and noncompliance identified in the report. We anticipate that some of the action steps that will be implemented will be long term in duration, and will require time to assess the measure of effectiveness. In addition, as appropriate, plans related to the district's continuous improvement monitoring may also relate to action steps proposed in response to this report. The system improvement plan has been approved and is included as a part of this final report.

**MICHELE POLLAND**

*Acting Chief*

*Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services*

Mr. James Yancey  
March 10, 2004  
Page 2

An update of outcomes achieved and/or a summary of related activities, as identified in your district's plan, must be submitted by June 30 and December 30 of each school year for the next two years, unless otherwise noted on the plan. A follow-up monitoring visit to your district will take place two years after your original monitoring visit.

If my staff can be of any assistance as you implement the System Improvement Plan, 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](mailto:Eileen.Amy@fldoe.org).

Thank you for your continuing commitment to improve services for exceptional education students in Marion County.

Sincerely,

*Michele Polland*

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

Enclosure

cc: Ron Crawford, School Board Chairman  
Members of the School Board  
Beverly Morris, School Board Attorney  
School Principals  
Bruce D. Foster, ESE Director  
Evy Friend  
Kim Komisar

**Marion County Final Monitoring Report**  
**Focused Monitoring Visit**  
**September 8-11, 2003**

**Table of Contents**

Executive Summary .....	1
Monitoring Process .....	13
Authority .....	13
Focused Monitoring .....	13
Key Data Indicators .....	13
District Selection.....	14
Sources of Information .....	14
On-Site Monitoring Activities .....	14
Interviews.....	15
Focus Group Interviews.....	15
Student Case Studies.....	15
Classroom Visits .....	15
Off-Site Monitoring Activities.....	16
Parent Surveys .....	16
Teacher Surveys.....	16
Student Surveys .....	16
Reviews of Student Records and District Forms .....	16
Reporting Process .....	17
Interim Reports .....	17
Preliminary Report.....	17
Final Report .....	17
Reporting of Information .....	19
Results.....	19
General Information.....	19
Service Delivery Models.....	20
Decision-making .....	21
Access to the General Curriculum/Resources.....	23
Staff Development .....	24
Parental Involvement .....	25
Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Indicator .....	25
Services to Gifted Students.....	25
Services to ESE Students in Charter Schools .....	27
Services to ESE Students in DJJ Facilities .....	27
Student Record Reviews .....	28
District Forms Review .....	29
District Response .....	30

System Improvement Plan.....	31
Recommendations and Technical Assistance .....	39
Recommendations.....	39
Technical Assistance.....	40
Appendix A: Development of the Monitoring Process.....	41
Appendix B: District Data .....	45
Appendix C: ESE Monitoring Team Members .....	57
Appendix D: Survey Results.....	61
Appendix E: Forms Review.....	73
Appendix F: Glossary of Acronyms .....	81

**Marion County School District  
Focused Monitoring Visit  
September 8-11, 2003**

**Executive Summary**

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community 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 Sections 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and programs of exceptional student education (ESE); 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 the Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 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 (34 CFR §§300.350(a)(2) and §300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA 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 §300.600(a)(1) and (2)).

During the week of September 8, 2003, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, conducted an on-site review of the exceptional student education programs in Marion County Public Schools. Paula Barnard, Director, Exceptional Student Education, served as the coordinator and point of contact for the district during the monitoring visit. In its continuing efforts to focus the monitoring process on student educational outcomes, the Bureau has identified four key data indicators: percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers); dropout rate for students with disabilities; percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma; and, participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities. Marion County was selected for monitoring on the basis of the percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes. The results of the monitoring process are reported under seven categories or topical issues that are considered to impact or contribute to the key data indicator. In addition, information related to services for gifted students, students served in charter schools, and students served in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities are reported. The results of records and forms reviews also are included.

## **Summary of Findings**

### **General Information**

The data reporting process related to time with nondisabled peers may not be implemented consistently or accurately across the district, particularly in schools with inclusion models that include co-teaching.

### **Service Delivery Options**

A full range of service delivery models are available across schools in the district. There is an initiative in the district to implement the “Excellence: A Commitment to Every Learner” (EXCEL) inclusion model in selected schools across the district, with a total of 24 schools across the district implementing some type of formal inclusion program, although these initiatives are not currently a component of most schools’ school improvement plans. Some schools, particularly at the middle and high school levels, continue to implement a parallel curriculum model that relies on ESE teachers teaching general curriculum courses to classes that consist only of students with disabilities, mirroring the content of the general education classes that include nondisabled students. Although students in these classes have access to the general curriculum, their time with nondisabled peers is limited.

### **Decision Making Process**

Respondents reported that placement decisions based on the strengths and needs of individual students are made through consensus of the IEP team participants, with guidance from staffing specialists on federal and state requirements, although teachers in several schools reported that placement is decided by the staffing specialist. A range of interventions were reported to be implemented prior to a student with a disability being moved to a more restrictive setting. While staff across the district expressed support for expansion of the inclusion initiatives, teachers in several schools report a need for more extensive training of ESE and general education teachers in order for inclusion to be successful. Some indicated that only ESE teachers are able to meet the needs of students with disabilities, although the needs cited were not always specific to the disabilities (i.e., poverty, homelessness, problematic home life). Decisions regarding participation in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) are not always based on state board rule delineating exemption criteria. In addition, some teachers reported a lack of communication between schools for students articulating from elementary to middle or middle to high school, which hinders decision-making regarding the classes in which a student should enroll.

### **Access to the General Curriculum/Resources**

Access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities varies across the district, and is somewhat dependent on the initiatives in place at the individual schools. Access is more likely to be provided in general education classes at the elementary level and in schools that are implementing the EXCEL program or some other inclusion model. At the middle and high school level, instruction in the Sunshine State Standards is more likely to be provided in an ESE classroom. Ample resources are provided by the district to support students with disabilities, including classroom and instructional materials, assistive technology, and small class sizes, although some teachers reported that additional staff is needed for inclusion programs to succeed.

### **Staff Development**

While school-level staff across the district reported ample opportunities for staff development, many were unable to provide specific examples of sessions they had attended, reporting only that “...Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) and Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) provide training.” Many respondents requested that additional training be provided in

inclusion and inclusive strategies; others differentiated between “informational sessions” and “training sessions,” noting that they needed more opportunities for hands-on learning. District staff reported that more intensive training is available for schools that express a need for training.

### **Parental Involvement**

The district conducts a variety of activities designed to encourage parental involvement, including the development and dissemination of informational materials. Parental input was evident in the IEPs reviewed through the formal record review process, as well as through the on-site case study activities.

### **Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Regular Class Placement Rate for Students with Disabilities**

When asked their opinion on the likely contributors to a relatively low regular class placement rate for students with disabilities in Marion County, respondents cited the practice of automatically placing students with disabilities in ESE classrooms, to a large degree based on the perceived needs of students with disabilities in general, rather than on the specific characteristics or needs of an individual child, as well as data-reporting errors that under-represent the number of students served in inclusive settings.

### **Gifted**

Students at the elementary and middle schools have access to gifted classes, although the services vary by school across the district. High school students are served through a consultative model that focuses on guidance activities. While parents reported general satisfaction with the gifted services their children receive, they reported significantly less satisfaction with their children’s experiences in regular education classes as compared to gifted classes.

### **Services to ESE Students in Charter Schools**

The Marion Charter School serves students with disabilities through a consultative model. Gifted students are provided with four hours of instruction weekly through a pullout model. The district supports ESE services in the charter school by providing a staffing specialist and a school psychologist, and encourages the school’s staff to participate in training opportunities sponsored by the district.

### **Services to ESE Students in Department of Juvenile Justice Facilities**

Students at the Marion Intensive Treatment Center are served through a consultative model. Students may select from the following diploma options: special diploma, standard diploma, GED, and GED exit option. The transition process at this facility appears to be comprehensive in nature and effectively implemented.

### **Record Reviews**

During the formal record reviews carried out as a part of the focused monitoring procedures, individual or non-systemic findings for student IEPs were noted in 19 areas. Systemic findings were identified in seven areas. Ten IEP teams were required to reconvene due to a lack of a majority of measurable annual goals. There were no funding adjustments as a result of the IEP reviews. Educational plans (EPs) for students identified as gifted failed to identify student weaknesses, as well as evaluation criteria, procedures, and schedules. Findings related to

matrices required corrective actions through review and revision of student data reported to the DOE. This finding was addressed under separate cover, and resulted in revised matrix levels for 29 students.

### **Forms Reviews**

Forms representing the following actions were found to require modification or revision:

- IEP Forms
- Notice and Consent for Initial Placement
- Notification of Change of Placement
- Notification of Change of free appropriate public education (FAPE)
- Informed Notice of Dismissal
- Notice of Ineligibility
- Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination
- Annual Notice of Confidentiality

### **System Improvement Plan**

In response to these findings, the district is required to develop a system improvement plan for submission to the Bureau. This plan must include activities and strategies intended to address specific findings, as well as measurable evidence of change. In developing the system improvement plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement activities resulting from this focused monitoring report to the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. The format for the system improvement plan, including a listing of the critical issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement, is provided with this executive summary.

During the process of conducting the focused monitoring activities, including daily debriefings with the monitoring team and district staff, it is often the case that suggestions and/or recommendations related to interventions or strategies are proposed. Listings of these recommendations as well as specific discretionary projects and DOE contacts available to provide technical assistance to the district in the development and implementation of the plan also are included as part of this report.

## Marion County School District Focused Monitoring System Improvement Plan

This section includes the issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement. The district is required to provide system improvement strategies to address identified findings, which may include an explanation of specific activities the district has committed to implementing, or it may consist of a broader statement describing planned strategies. For each issue, the plan also must define the measurable evidence of whether or not the desired outcome has been achieved. Target dates that extend for more than one year should include benchmarks in order to track interim progress. Findings identified as “ESE” are those findings that reflect issues specific to ESE students. Findings identified as “All” are those findings that reflect issues related to the student population as a whole, including ESE students.

A district self-assessment report is an integral part of the following system improvement plan. This self-assessment must include a random sampling of appropriate student records, staff trainings, IEP team meetings, or other pertinent activity. The district must use the sample to evaluate the effectiveness of a given strategy or intervention, and report the results of this evaluation at least annually. In addition, the district will be required to report semi-annually on the strategies and interventions implemented during the reporting period.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
General Information	1. The data reporting process related to time with nondisabled peers is not implemented consistently across the district.	X		Develop new form for uniform use. New form will be distributed to all Staffing Specialists and will be available at all schools during 2004.	District report of self-assessment reveals that all schools accurately report time with nondisabled peers for students with disabilities.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Service Delivery Options	Addressed under “Access to the General Curriculum/Resources”				

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Decision-Making	2. Teachers in several schools reported that placement is decided by the staffing specialist.		X	Training for Staffing Specialists and teachers on committee decision making process, including that one role of the Staffing Specialist is to ensure compliance with all local, state, and federal requirements related to least restrictive environment.	<p>Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the topic or skills addressed.</p> <p>Staff will conduct observations of IEP team meetings.</p> <p>District report of self-assessment reveals that placement decisions are based on input from all participants.</p> <p>June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005</p>
	3. Some staff stated that only ESE teachers are able to meet the needs of students with disabilities, although the needs cited were not always specific to the disabilities.		X	Continue training of schools in serving students with disabilities in inclusive settings, effective instruction for students with diverse needs, and the use of instructional accommodations and modifications.	<p>Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the skills addressed.</p> <p>June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Decision-Making (continued)	4. Decisions regarding participation in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) are not based on state board rule delineating exemption criteria.		X	<p>IEP teams will follow state board rule delineating exemption.</p> <p>Provide training to administrators, Staffing Specialists, and teachers on exemption criteria, including use of FCAT exemption worksheet/form disseminated by the Bureau.</p>	<p>District report of self-assessment reveals that FCAT exemption criteria are appropriately applied.</p> <p>June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005</p>
	5. It was reported that there is often a lack of communication between schools for students articulating from elementary to middle or middle to high school, which hinders the decision-making process.	X		<p>Articulation forms will be developed to support the process and procedures for students articulating from one level to another; training will be provided in the use of the form.</p> <p>Staffing Specialists will schedule meetings with schools for articulation.</p>	<p>Staff will review records and/or survey/interview IEP team participants regarding the articulation process.</p> <p>District report of self-assessment reveals that articulation forms are used by IEP teams to aid in information gathering and decision-making.</p> <p>June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005</p>
Access to the General Curriculum/ Resources	6. The use of a parallel curriculum in ESE classes that mirrors the instruction in general education classes provides access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities, but limits their time with nondisabled peers	X		School administrators and staff will be trained on curriculum and the inclusion process, including the use of supports and services that would allow students with disabilities to be served in the general class setting (e.g., Learning Strategies or Unique	<p>Staff will review records and/or survey/interview IEP team participants at targeted schools.</p> <p>District report of self-</p>

<b>Category</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>ESE</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>System Improvement Strategy</b>	<b>Evidence of Change and Target Date</b>
Access to the General Curriculum/Resources (continued)	(e.g. Dunnellon Middle School; Howard Middle School; Belleview High School, Dunnellon Middle School).			Skill courses; consultative services; co-taught classes).  Training will target schools that use a parallel curriculum model.	assessment reveals that all appropriate supports and services were considered prior to enrolling a student in an ESE-only section of a course.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Staff Development	7. Many respondents requested that additional training be provided in inclusion and inclusive strategies, with a focus on hands-on learning rather than informational sessions.	X		Develop district-wide inclusion plan.  Continue to provide training to administrators and staff on inclusion practices and the benefits of inclusion, including follow-up training for staff currently implementing an inclusive model.	Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the skills addressed.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Parental Involvement	None noted.				
Stakeholder Opinions	8. Respondents cited the existence of an underlying climate or culture within the district that strongly encourages “ownership” of ESE students by ESE teachers.	X		Continue to provide training to administrators and staff on inclusion practices and the benefits of inclusion.  Continue training of schools in serving students with disabilities in inclusive settings, effective instruction for students with diverse	Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the topic or skills addressed.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Stakeholder Opinions (continued)				needs, and the use of instructional accommodations and modifications.	June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Gifted Services	9. High school students are served through a consultative model that focuses on guidance activities.	X		The district will continue to work with Bureau staff to review and revise the high school gifted program to ensure that the individual needs of each student, and which are the result of the student's giftedness, are addressed.	District report of self-assessment describes a gifted program for high school students that addresses needs specific to the individual gifted students.  Staff will review records and/or survey/interview EP team participants regarding identifying and addressing individual student needs.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
	10. Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of gifted students in general education classes is not consistently provided.		X	Continue to provide inservice training to teachers of gifted students related to differentiated instruction and the use of a parallel curriculum.  Peer training of general education teachers will be provided (ongoing).	Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the skills addressed.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Gifted Services (continued)					June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Services to ESE Students in Charter Schools	None noted.				
Services to Students in DJJ Facilities	None noted.				
Records Reviews	<p>11. Systemic findings on IEPs were identified in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inadequate present level of educational performance statements</li> <li>• inadequate statements indicating how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum</li> <li>• lack of a majority of measurable annual goals</li> <li>• lack of evidence that the results of state or district assessment were considered</li> </ul>	X		<p>IEP training will be provided to ESE staff (on-going during 2004-05).</p> <p>Materials used for training will include "Developing Quality IEPs" and other materials developed and disseminated by the Bureau.</p> <p>Training will focus on the areas identified through the monitoring process as areas of need.</p> <p>New forms will be developed to meet the requirements of compliance.</p> <p>District and school-level staff will be trained on the use of the new forms.</p>	<p>District staff will review a sampling of IEPs from all schools, using the Bureau's work papers and source book for IEP reviews.</p> <p>District report of self-assessment reveals that all IEPs meet the requirements for compliance.</p> <p>June 2004 June 2005</p>
	12. Ten IEPs with a lack of majority of measurable annual goals were required to be reconvened.	X		Meetings were held and new IEPs with measurable annual goals sent to DOE	January 2004

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Records Reviews (continued)	13. Five IEPs reviewed through the matrix review process did not support the level of services reported.	X		<p>The district conducted a self-assessment of 35 IEPs, and submitted corrections for 29 of those records in January 2004.</p> <p>The district will review the matrix system to determine which staff will be delegated to develop the matrix for individual student IEPs.</p> <p>Training will be provided to the designated staff to ensure application of appropriate standards.</p>	<p>District staff will review a sampling of IEPs reported at a matrix level of 254 or 255.</p> <p>District report of self-assessment reveals that all matrices meet the requirements for IEP content and services provided.</p> <p>June 2004 June 2005</p>
Forms Reviews	<p>14. Revisions were required for the following forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEP Forms</li> <li>• Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</li> <li>• Notification of Change of Placement</li> <li>• Notification of Change of FAPE</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Dismissal</li> <li>• Notice of Ineligibility</li> <li>• Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination</li> </ul>	X		Develop new forms to comply with monitoring compliance issues; develop a Policy and Procedures manual for use of forms for ESE Staff.	<p>Forms to be submitted to the Bureau for review and approval.</p> <p>June 2004</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Notice of Confidentiality</li> </ul>		X	The district is developing a student handbook for each level	To be disseminated in the student handbooks.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Forms Reviews (continued)				(elementary, middle, and high school), to include revisions to this notice.	Fall 2004

# Monitoring Process

## Authority

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community 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 Sections 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and programs of exceptional student education (ESE); 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 the Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 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 (34 CFR §§300.350(a)(2) and §300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA 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 §300.600(a)(1) and (2)).

The monitoring system established to oversee exceptional student education (ESE) programs reflects the Department's commitment to provide assistance and service to school districts. The system is designed to emphasize improved outcomes and educational benefits for students while continuing to conduct those activities necessary to ensure compliance with applicable federal and state laws, rules, and regulations. The system provides consistency with other state efforts, including the State Improvement Plan required by the IDEA. A description of the development of the current monitoring system in Florida is provided in appendix A.

## Focused Monitoring

The purpose of the focused monitoring process is to implement a methodology that targets the Bureau's monitoring intervention on key data indicators that were identified as significant for educational outcomes for students. Through this process, the Bureau will use such data to inform the monitoring process, thereby implementing a strategic approach to intervention and commitment of resources that will improve student outcomes.

## Key Data Indicators

Four key data indicators were recommended by the monitoring stakeholders' workgroup and were adopted for implementation by the Bureau. The key data indicators for the 2003 school year and their sources of data are as follows:

- percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers) [Data source: Survey 9]

- dropout rate for students with disabilities [Data source: Survey 5]
- percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma [Data source: Survey 5]
- participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities [Data sources: performance data from the assessment files and Survey 3 enrollment data]

### **District Selection**

Districts were selected to be monitored based on a review of data from the 2001-02 school year that was submitted electronically to the Department of Education (DOE) Information Database for Surveys 2, 3, 5, 9, and from the assessment files. This data is compiled into an annual data profile for each district (LEA Profile). The 2003 LEA profiles for all Florida school districts are available on the web at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/datapage.htm>.

In making the decision to include Marion County in this year's focused monitoring visits, Bureau staff reviewed data related to the regular class placement rate for students with disabilities from survey 9. This review indicated that Marion County's rate, while increasing from 36% in 2001-02 to 39% in 2002-03, approached the lowest regular class placement rate for students with disabilities for all districts in the state. Marion County School District's LEA profile and the listing of districts rank-ordered on regular class placement rate for students with disabilities is included in this report as appendix B.

### **Sources of Information**

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

The Bureau conducted the on-site focused monitoring visit from September 8 through 11, 2003. Six Bureau staff members, one contracted staff member, and four peer monitors conducted site-visits 11 schools. Peer monitors are exceptional student education personnel from other school districts who are trained to assist with the DOE's monitoring activities. In addition, four University of Miami research staff conducted focus group interviews. A listing of all participating monitors is provided as appendix C.

In an effort to focus the efforts of Bureau staff on assisting the district in determining the source of its relatively low ranking on regular class placement when compared with other districts in the state, specific schools to be visited were selected with particular attention to schools with the lowest rates of regular class placement. In addition, schools were selected to include students served in charter schools and in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities. The following schools were selected for site-visits:

- Belleview Elementary School
- Dunnellon Elementary School
- Maplewood Elementary School
- Oakcrest Elementary School
- Dunnellon Middle School
- Howard Middle School
- Hillcrest ESE Center
- Dunnellon High School

- Belleview High School
- Marion Charter School
- Marion Juvenile Correctional Facility

### ***Interviews***

Interviews with selected district- and school-level personnel are conducted using interview protocols developed specifically to address the key data indicator. In addition to the protocol developed specifically to examine regular class placement students with disabilities, separate protocols are used to address services to gifted students, services provided in charter schools, and services to students served in DJJ facilities. In Marion County, interviews were conducted with 97 people, including 10 district-level administrators or support staff, 30 school-level administrators or support staff, 38 ESE teachers, and 19 general education teachers.

### ***Focus Group Interviews***

Focus groups for parents, teachers and students are conducted by the University of Miami to gather information related to the percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular education classes (spending at least 80% of their day with nondisabled peers). In order to provide maximum opportunity for input about the district's ESE services, a minimum of four separate focus group interviews are conducted. The participant groups include: parents of students with disabilities; teachers and other service providers (ESE and general education); students with disabilities who are pursuing a standard diploma, and students with disabilities who are pursuing a special diploma. Separate sessions are conducted for each participant group.

In conjunction with the 2003 Marion County monitoring activities, 39 parents participated in the parent focus group, representing 34 students with disabilities in elementary, middle, and high school. Eleven teachers and staff, representing elementary, middle, and high schools participated in the teacher focus group. There were 14 participants in the standard diploma student focus group and five participants in the focus group for students pursuing a special diploma.

### ***Student Case Studies***

Student case studies are conducted for the purpose of performing an in-depth review of the services a student receives in accordance with his or her IEP. As part of this process, the student's records are reviewed, Bureau staff or peer monitors observe the case study student in class, and teachers are interviewed regarding the implementation of the student's IEP. Twenty in-depth case studies were conducted in Marion County.

### ***Classroom Visits***

Classroom visits are conducted in both ESE and general education classrooms. Some visits are conducted in conjunction with individual student case studies, while others are conducted as general observations of classrooms that include exceptional students. Curriculum and instruction, classroom management and discipline, and classroom design and resources are observed during the general classroom visits. A total of 37 classrooms (22 ESE and 15 regular education) were visited during the focused monitoring visit to Marion County.

### **Off-Site Monitoring Activities**

Surveys are designed by the University of Miami research staff in order to provide maximum opportunity for input about the district's ESE services from parents of students with disabilities and students identified as gifted, ESE and regular education teachers, and students with disabilities in grades 9-12. Results of the surveys are discussed in the body of this report. Data from each of the surveys are included as appendix D.

#### ***Parent Surveys***

The survey that is sent to parents is printed in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole where applicable. It includes a cover letter and a postage paid reply envelope. In addition, the survey to parents of students with disabilities includes a notice regarding the opportunity to participate in a focus group.

In conjunction with the 2003 Marion County monitoring activities, the parent survey was sent to parents of 6,875 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 828 parents (PK, n=61; K-5, n=360; 6-8, n=212; 9-12, n=195) representing 12% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 779 families were returned as undeliverable, representing 11% of the sample for students with disabilities.

For gifted students, the survey was sent to parents of 1,360 students identified as gifted for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 365 parents (K-5, n=168; 6-8, n=98; 9-12, n=99) representing 27% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 49 families were returned as undeliverable, representing 4% of the sample.

#### ***Teacher Surveys***

Surveys developed for teachers and other service providers were mailed to each school, with a memo explaining the key data indicator and the monitoring process. All teachers, both general education and ESE, were provided an opportunity to respond. Surveys were returned from 869 teachers (36% of all teachers in the district), representing 36 (73%) of the schools in Marion County.

#### ***Student Surveys***

A sufficient number of surveys were provided to allow all students with disabilities, grades 9-12, to respond. Instructions for administration of the survey by classroom teachers, including a written script, were provided for each class or group of students. Since participation in this survey is not appropriate for some students whose disabilities might impair their understanding of the survey, professional judgment is used to determine appropriate participants. Student surveys were returned from 567 (29%) students who are enrolled in grades 9-12. Surveys were returned from four (44%) of the nine schools in the district with grades 9-12.

#### ***Reviews of Student Records and District Forms***

Prior to the on-site monitoring visit, Bureau staff conduct compliance reviews of student records that are randomly selected from the population of exceptional students. The record of at least one student with a matrix rating of 254 or 255 may be reviewed at each school during the on-site visit, if available. In addition to the compliance reviews, selected student records are reviewed at the school sites in conjunction with student case studies and classroom visits. In Marion County,

35 records were reviewed for compliance prior to the on-site visit and seven records were reviewed on-site for matrix compliance.

In addition, Bureau staff review selected district forms and notices to determine if the required components are included. The results of the review of student records and district forms are described in this report.

## **Reporting Process**

### **Interim Reports**

Daily debriefing sessions are conducted by the monitoring team members in order to review findings, as well as to determine if there is a need to address additional issues or visit additional sites. Preliminary findings and concerns are shared with the ESE director and/or designee through daily debriefings with the monitoring team leader during the monitoring visit. In addition, the district ESE director is invited to attend the final team debriefing with Bureau staff and peer monitors. During the course of these activities, suggestions for interventions or strategies to be incorporated into the district's system improvement plan may be proposed. Within two weeks of the visit, Bureau administrative staff conduct a telephone conference with the ESE director to review major findings.

### **Preliminary Report**

Subsequent to the on-site visit, Bureau staff prepare a written report. The report is developed to include the following elements: an executive summary, a description of the monitoring process, and the results section. A description of the development of the current monitoring system for exceptional student education is included as an appendix. Other appendices with data specific to the district also accompany each report. The report is sent to the district ESE director. The director will have the opportunity to discuss and clarify with Bureau staff any concerns regarding the report before it becomes final.

### **Final Report**

Upon final review and revision by Bureau staff based on input from the ESE director, the final report is issued. The report is sent to the district, and is posted to the Bureau's website at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm>.

Within 30 days of the district's receipt of the final report, the system improvement plan, including activities targeting specific findings, must be submitted to the Bureau for review. In developing this plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement plan for focused monitoring to the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. In collaboration with Bureau staff, the district is encouraged to develop methods that correlate activities in order to utilize resources, staff, and time in an efficient manner in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Upon approval of the system improvement plan, the plan is posted on the website noted above.



## Reporting of Information

The data generated through the surveys, focus group interviews, individual interviews, case studies, and classroom visits are summarized in this report. The results from the review of student records and district forms are also presented in this report. This report provides conclusions with regard to the key data indicator and specifically addresses topical issues that may contribute to or impact the indicator. For the percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular education classes, these include the following:

- general information
- service delivery models
- decision-making
- resources
- staff development
- parental involvement
- stakeholder opinion related to the indicator

In addition, information related to services for gifted students, the results of the records reviews, and the results of the forms reviews are reported.

To the extent possible, this report focuses on systemic issues rather than on isolated instances of noncompliance or need for improvement. Systemic issues are those that occur at a sufficient enough frequency that the monitoring team could reasonably infer a system-wide problem. Findings are presented in a preliminary report, and the district has the opportunity to clarify items of concern. In a collaborative effort between the district and Bureau staff, system improvement areas are identified. Findings are addressed through the development of strategies for improvement, and evidence of change will be identified as a joint effort between the district and the Bureau. Strategies that are identified as long-term approaches toward improving the district's issue related to the key data indicator are also addressed through the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan.

## Results

### General Information

This section provides demographic and background information specific to the district. Marion County School District has a total school population of 39,689 (PreK-12), with 17% identified as students with disabilities (including 3% identified eligible as speech impaired only), and 3% identified as gifted.

Marion County is considered a middle-sized district, and is one of 13 districts in this enrollment group. Marion County was selected for focused monitoring based on the percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (39%). Although the district has shown gradual improvement in this area over the past three years, the rate continues to be significantly lower than the rates of the enrollment group (55%) and the state (48%). Interviews with district- and school-level staff indicate that the data reporting process related to time with nondisabled peers

may not be implemented consistently or accurately across the district, particularly in schools with inclusion models that utilize co-teaching.

### **Service Delivery Models**

This section provides information regarding the service delivery options available in Marion County. In an effort to include students with disabilities in general education classes and to provide instruction to all students in a manner designed to target specific areas of need for individual students, the district currently is implementing an inclusion program called “Excellence: A Commitment to Every Learner” (EXCEL) at selected school sites across the district. Significant resources have been committed to this program, and there are plans to expand its use throughout the district. This program groups students by ability level for “scaffolded instruction” for one or two periods per day. The program utilizes direct instruction, with small groups of students (i.e., 4-5 students in lower level groups; 8-10 students in higher level groups) being taught by one adult. All available adults in the school are assigned groups with which to work. District staff report that 24 schools in the district currently have formal inclusion programs in place, including the use of the EXCEL model, co-teaching, support facilitation, as well as other approaches to inclusive placements. While the district ESE department is actively involved in the process of increasing inclusion programs throughout the district, it was reported that these efforts currently are not reflected in the school improvement plans for some schools.

A full range of placement options is available across the district, from inclusion and co-teaching to a separate-school program for students with more significant disabilities. Of the four elementary schools visited as part of this monitoring visit, three have formal inclusion programs in some or all grade levels (i.e., grades 1-3 at Dunnellon Elementary; grades 3-5 at Maplewood Elementary; all grades at Belleview Elementary), while the third provides for regular class placement with consultation by the ESE teacher (Oakcrest Elementary). In addition to the inclusion model, each of these schools also is able to serve students at the resource and separate levels of placement, when that is determined by the IEP team to be the least restrictive environment.

Two middle schools were visited. At Dunnellon Middle School, three ESE teachers are assigned to co-teach with general education teachers in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading, language arts, math, and science. This school also has four classrooms that serve students through a “self-contained” model. While these classrooms were described using categorical labels (e.g., the specific learning disabled or SLD class, the educable mentally handicapped or EMH class, the emotionally handicapped/severely emotionally disturbed or EH/SED class), it was reported that students are not actually placed in the classes based on exceptionality or “label,” but rather by matching the needs of the individual students to the instructional focus of the class. This was supported by a review of the primary exceptionality of students on the class rolls, which revealed a mix of eligibility categories in each of the classes. In addition to inclusion and self-contained classrooms, Dunnellon Middle School also serves students for varying numbers of periods in ESE sections of courses in learning strategies, language arts, reading, general math, pre-algebra, history, science, social studies, career research, and critical thinking. At Howard Middle School, some ESE students were served in the general education setting with consultation for core subjects, although the majority of students with disabilities were scheduled in ESE classes for

their core courses. Electives for these students were generally provided through general education classes.

Both of the high schools visited provide a full range of placement options. Dunnellon High School is considered a “tri-county high school” serving students from Marion, Levy, and Citrus Counties. There is a new inclusion model in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Dunnellon, with one ESE teacher providing support to students in general education classes. It was reported that some ESE classes provide only functional or significantly modified curricula. In addition, there are also six ESE teachers who teach ESE classes that address the Sunshine State Standards in English, math, science, social studies, as well as intensive English, and math remediation classes. The course codes for these classes are the same as those for the general curriculum standard diploma courses, but only students with disabilities are enrolled in these sections. Interviews with ESE and general education teachers indicated that the course content in these classes generally mirrors that of the general education sections of the courses, with some teachers reported that the ESE sections progress more slowly and provide a more supportive and nurturing environment for the students with disabilities. Two concerns regarding this system were noted by Bureau staff. The first concern is that the curriculum in some of the ESE classes may not adhere to the Sunshine State Standards to the extent intended. The second concern reflects the opposite situation. If, for example, the math remediation classes all cover the same curriculum, and utilize instructional strategies appropriate for students who are struggling with the concepts being taught, there does not appear to be a justification to enroll all students with disabilities in one section. Most students with disabilities who are enrolled in ESE classes for their core courses take general education vocational classes. It was reported that the students served on a consultative model are tracked by the district staffing specialist assigned to the school rather than by an ESE teacher at the school.

At Belleview High School, most ESE students are served through a parallel curriculum model, in which they are enrolled in ESE sections of general education courses that are taught by ESE teachers. However, unlike many other schools that utilize this model, the majority of the ESE teachers at Belleview are certified in general education areas, and have ESE certification as an add-on area or are currently pursuing it.

In summary, a full range of service delivery models are available across schools in the district. There is an initiative in the district to implement the “Excellence: A Commitment to Every Learner” (EXCEL) inclusion model in selected schools across the district, with a total of 24 schools across the district implementing some type of formal inclusion program, although these initiatives are not currently a component of most schools’ school improvement plans. Some schools, particularly at the middle and high school levels, continue to implement a parallel curriculum model that relies on ESE teachers teaching general curriculum courses to classes that consist only of students with disabilities, mirroring the content of the general education classes that include nondisabled students. Although students in these classes have access to the general curriculum, their time with nondisabled peers is limited.

### **Decision-making**

This category refers to issues and concerns referenced by school and district staff when IEP teams make placement decisions for students with disabilities. District and school staff from

across the district reported that the IEP teams make the placement decisions based on the individual needs of the student, and that grades, FCAT performance, and behavioral considerations all contribute to the decision regarding where a student can best be served. However, when asked to give examples by describing the decision-making process for specific students, such as a case study student or the most recent IEP team meeting attended, respondents from several of the schools visited reported that the staffing specialist was responsible for the placement decisions. This was reported by both ESE and general education teachers. District staff indicated that the role of the staffing specialists at many IEP team meetings includes that of ensuring that placement decisions are made in accordance with requirements of federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules, and are not based simply on administrative convenience or teacher preference. Several participants in the teacher focus groups reported that IEP team decisions often are based on policy directives from the district office or the Florida DOE, rather than on what is in the best interests of individual students, and that many students are unilaterally placed in inclusive settings, to their detriment.

School-level staff across the district reported a range of interventions attempted prior to moving a student to a more restrictive setting (e.g., instruction adapted to the learning style of the student; accommodations such as oral testing and shortened assignments; development and review of behavior intervention plans; matching the needs of the student, including personality and learning style, to the particular classroom or teacher; addressing motivational level and attitude of the student; eliciting assistance from the parents; tutoring; use of assistive technology such as audio books, etc...).

Staff across the district mentioned the inclusion initiatives currently being implemented in Marion County as a significant component of the decision-making process. During the interview process, district-level staff as well as administrators from all schools visited expressed support for the movement toward more inclusive settings, particularly for students identified as SLD. While the majority of teachers also spoke favorably of the inclusive placements, ESE and general education teachers from several schools expressed concern that more training and support is needed in order for the program to be successful and that inclusion may not meet the needs of all students. Participants in the teacher focus group also reported that more preparation is needed for teachers, and that inclusion may not be appropriate for all students. Teachers at one school that utilizes a co-teaching model were concerned and unclear about the differing roles of the ESE and general education teachers. Concerns regarding a lack of preparedness on the part of school staff may affect the placement decisions made by individual IEP teams.

During the interview process, teachers were asked to discuss placement issues in general as well as how placement decisions are made for specific students. ESE and general education teachers from several schools commented that, in general, students with disabilities need to be with special education teachers, that ESE classrooms provide the smaller and more nurturing environment required by these students, and that general education teachers are not prepared to address the unique needs of students with disabilities. These comments were in reference to students with high incidence disabilities such as SLD, EMH, and language impairments (LI), as well as those with more significant disabilities (e.g., autism). When prompted to give examples of needs that could not be met in the general education setting, many respondents noted the unique learning challenges of students with disabilities, but several primarily referred to issues of

poverty, homelessness, and problematic home lives. The latter would be expected to affect all students, not just those in ESE programs.

Regarding the decision-making process in general, it was noted that decisions related to participation in statewide assessment for students with disabilities are not based on the criteria delineated in Rule 6A-1.0943 of the Florida Administrative Code (FAC) and as a result some students not eligible for exemption from the FCAT may have been exempted. District staff reported that meetings are scheduled at middle schools to address the course schedules for rising ninth graders, and that a student recommendation form is filled out for all K-8 students to assist in IEP development and course scheduling for new school years. Despite this, some staff from middle and high schools noted a lack of communication between elementary/middle and middle/high schools when developing schedules for students progressing from school to school, noting that formal articulation IEP meetings are not required. They indicated that this hinders decision-making regarding the classes in which a student should enroll (e.g., a standard diploma course taught by an ESE teacher, only for students with disabilities; a standard diploma course taught by a general education teacher that includes nondisabled peers).

In summary, respondents reported that placement decisions based on the strengths and needs of individual students are made through consensus of the IEP team participants, with guidance from staffing specialists on federal and state requirements, although teachers in several schools reported that placement is decided by the staffing specialist. A range of interventions were reported to be implemented prior to a student with a disability being moved to a more restrictive setting. While staff across the district expressed support for expansion of the inclusion initiatives, teachers in several schools report a need for more extensive training of ESE and general education teachers in order for inclusion to be successful. Some indicated that only ESE teachers are able to meet the needs of students with disabilities, although the needs cited were not always specific to the disabilities (i.e., poverty, homelessness, problematic home life). Decisions regarding participation in the FCAT are not always based on state board rule delineating exemption criteria. In addition, some teachers reported a lack of communication between schools for students articulating from elementary to middle or middle to high school, which hinders decision-making regarding the classes in which a student should enroll.

### **Access to the General Curriculum/Resources**

This category refers to the manner in which students with disabilities are provided access to the general curriculum as well as the resources provided to promote this access. As reported above, some schools in Marion County, particularly middle and high schools, provide a parallel curriculum for high school students with disabilities who are pursuing a standard diploma. Recent initiatives implementing inclusive programs have targeted elementary schools, and provide access to the general curriculum to students with disabilities through enrollment in general education classes. As noted above in the section on “Service Delivery Models,” the inclusion programs vary across schools, and across grade levels within schools. The EXCEL program provides access to the general curriculum (reading and/or math) through inclusive settings in some schools, although it encompasses a relatively short period of time within the school day (e.g., a 30-45 minute reading period at Belleview Elementary School).

While the inclusion initiatives are currently being expanded to middle and high schools, at these levels many students with disabilities continue to receive instruction in ESE-only sections of general education classes through a parallel curriculum model. Some participants in the parent and teacher focus groups reported that the content in general education classes is simply too difficult for some students who are currently mainstreamed, and that instruction is provided too quickly. In general, participants in the teacher focus groups reported that inclusion was likely to be effective in the lower grades, but that secondary students benefit more from instruction in ESE classrooms.

In interviews across the district, administrators and staff reported ample resources in the way of instructional materials and technology. Small class sizes for both ESE and general education classes were observed in all schools visited by Bureau monitors. This was contradicted somewhat by participants in the teacher focus group, who reported a need both for more materials as well as for additional staff in order for inclusion to be successful. Administrators and teachers at several schools reported that they considered their staffing specialist to be a primary resource. Staff across the district reported that the common planning times before and after school provided by the shortened school day for students serves as a resource in support of inclusive programs, although many teachers noted that the resulting extended uninterrupted instructional time with students fosters “burn-out” for some teachers.

In summary, access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities varies across the district, and often is dependent on the initiatives in place at the individual schools. Access is more likely to be provided in general education classes at the elementary level and in schools that are implementing the EXCEL program or some other inclusion model. At the middle and high school levels, instruction in the Sunshine State Standards is more likely to be provided in an ESE classroom. Ample resources are provided by the district to support students with disabilities, including classroom and instructional materials, assistive technology, and small class sizes, although some teachers reported that additional staff is needed for inclusion programs to succeed.

### **Staff Development**

This category refers to any staff development activities that directly target the placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment and that promote increased time with nondisabled peers. District staff reported that FDLRS and the FIN have provided training on inclusion, in addition to training provided on-site at an inclusive school system in Hesperia, California. The team from Hesperia also has come to Marion County to provide training to several school faculties, as well as to 40 school and district-level administrators. In addition to training opportunities that directly address inclusion as a service delivery model, district staff reported a wide variety of additional inservice and staff development opportunities designed to prepare all teachers, both general education and ESE, to more effectively work with a wide variety of students. When asked to describe training they have participated in, school-level staff across the district reported ample opportunities for staff development. However, many were unable to provide specific examples of actual training sessions they had attended, reporting only that “...FDLRS and FIN provide training.” Of those who reported participating in staff development activities, many requested that additional training be provided in inclusion and inclusive strategies; others differentiated between “informational sessions” and “training

sessions,” noting that they needed more opportunities for hands-on learning. District staff reported that a range of training opportunities are available, and that schools have access to training based on the level of need indicated by their individual faculty members. Participants in both the parent and the teacher focus groups indicated that lack of adequate training for teachers was a significant problem in the district that results in a lack of success for many mainstreamed students.

For schools that are implementing the EXCEL program, training has been and continues to be provided to participating staff. During the course of this monitoring visit, a team was being prepared to attend training sessions in California.

### **Parental Involvement**

This category refers to parent involvement as it relates directly to the placement of students in with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. The district conducts a variety of activities designed to encourage parental involvement, including the development and dissemination of informational materials. Parental input was evident in the IEPs reviewed through the formal record review process, as well as through the on-site case study activities.

#### *Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Regular Class Placement Rate for Students with Disabilities*

This category refers to respondents’ views on issues directly related to the percentage of student with disabilities in regular class placement. When asked their opinion on the likely contributors to a relatively low regular class placement rate for students with disabilities in Marion County, the following issues were cited most frequently:

- the practice of automatically placing students with disabilities in ESE classrooms, to a large degree based on the perceived needs of students with disabilities in general, rather than on the specific characteristics or needs of an individual child (expressed by administrators, ESE teachers, general education teachers, and by parent participants in the focus group)
- data-reporting errors that under-represent the number of students served in inclusive settings

### **Services to Gifted Students**

Gifted students at the elementary level are served through a pull-out model for 4-5 hours per week or in a full-time classroom, depending on the school attended. At the middle school level, students are served for one period per week in a content area class. Students at the high school level are served through a consultative model. Of the 365 parents who responded to the survey for gifted students, 74% reported satisfaction with services their child receives.

During the course of the on-site monitoring visit, questions were raised regarding the appropriate area of certification for teachers who provide consultative services to gifted students at the high school level. In reviewing the nature of the consultative services provided, the district reported that the students are not enrolled in a specific course for credit, and that these consultative services are not reflected through any course code. A description of the services provided to high school gifted students was provided to staff in the Bureau’s ESE Program Development and Services section (PD&S). These services include meetings to be held one to three times per month with the student or the student’s teacher(s), with the gifted consultant available on an as-needed basis. The student goals for the program include “...developing a sense of community for

gifted students...,” but primarily focus on activities such as: providing information on colleges, scholarships, and testing information; organizing workshops on time management, stress reduction, test-taking and study strategies; and, guiding students through the college selection process and informing them of requirements for graduation and state scholarships. The majority of these goals appear to be appropriate for all high school students, not just those with needs related to their giftedness. As a result of the on-site visit, district staff are working with the Bureau’s Program Specialist for the Gifted to address concerns raised regarding the current system for meeting the needs of gifted high school students.

A revised version of the Future Think curriculum is used in grades K-8. While three of the six gifted service providers interviewed (i.e., five teachers, one coordinator) reported that general education teachers have been trained in differentiated curriculum and are expected to implement it in their classrooms, the other three reported no integration of gifted services/differentiated curriculum in general education classes. This inconsistency was reflected in the parent survey in which 85% of respondents reported satisfaction with the gifted teachers’ expertise in teaching students identified as gifted, while only 64% reported satisfaction with the general education teachers’ expertise in that area. Similarly, 84% reported that their children were academically challenged in their gifted classes, while only 59% reported that their children were academically challenged in the regular education classes.

It was reported that the district uses the Slosson Oral Reading Test or the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (K-BIT) as screening instruments. Students may be referred by parents or by teachers. The district has a Plan B to ensure access to the gifted program by students from under-represented groups. It was reported that students are dismissed from the gifted program through a formal staffing process; this occurs when students choose not to participate in gifted classes. The gifted coordinator for the district reported that services to gifted students are documented on an educational plan (EP) that is reviewed every three years; however, two teachers routinely referred to the plan as an IEP.

The gifted teachers interviewed reported that Paula Barnard, ESE Director, has been very supportive of the gifted programs, and that Mary Orr, Gifted Coordinator, is always available to provide assistance when needed. Staff development activities are provided through monthly inservice sessions on gifted issues, and staff report that the district actively supports attendance at conferences and other professional meetings related to gifted students.

Marion County currently is addressing under-representation of minority students in its gifted program through the continuous improvement monitoring process. Interventions target increasing the referral rate and implementation of the district’s Plan B in an effort to decrease disproportionality in the program.

In summary, students at the elementary and middle schools have access to gifted classes, although the services vary by school across the district. High school students are served through a consultative model that focuses on guidance activities. While parents reported general satisfaction with the gifted services their children receive, they reported significantly less satisfaction with their children’s experiences in regular education classes as compared to gifted classes.

### **Services to ESE Students in Charter Schools**

Marion Charter School has an enrollment of 187 students with 42 ESE students, including four students identified as gifted. Services to students with disabilities are provided through a consultative model, by an ESE teacher who comes to the school twice weekly. The gifted teacher is a full-time teacher, although she only provides gifted pull-out services twice weekly for two hours each. The remainder of her time is allocated as a reading specialist, and she provides remediation services to students who need additional assistance. A speech therapist and an occupational therapist (OT) provide contracted services one day per week.

ESE students are fully included, and are dispersed throughout all of the general education classes. It was reported that the district is responsible for inputting placement data for their school into the district database. School staff report that this is helpful, although the data is not always accurate or timely. This concern was supported by a review of the printouts provided to Bureau staff during the visit.

The position of LEA representative is provided by the district in the form of staffing specialist. School staff reported that it would be easier for the school if there were consistency with staffing specialist and psychologist, rather than having new individuals serve in those capacities each year. District staff reported that changes in personnel have occurred across the district, not just at the charter school, and is the result of staff turnover. The gifted teacher at the charter school has participated in in-service sessions provided by the district, although other staff at the school report relying on training conducted by FDLRS and FIN. However, district staff report that teachers from the charter school are welcome at all district-sponsored training opportunities, and have been invited to participate in all recent training activities.

In summary, the Marion Charter School serves students with disabilities through a consultative model. Gifted students are provided with four hours of instruction weekly through a pullout model. The district supports ESE services in the charter school by providing a staffing specialist and a school psychologist, and encourages the school's staff to participate in training opportunities sponsored by the district.

### **Services to ESE Students in DJJ Facilities**

Services for students with disabilities at the Marion Intensive Treatment Center are provided through a consultative model. Speech services are provided through the district. All ESE students are fully included in regular classes with 10 or fewer students. The facility is a level eight facility, with a capacity of 43 residents. Of the 43 currently enrolled, 17 are students with disabilities. There are no gifted students in the facility at this time.

There are four general education teachers who teach the core curriculum as well as two vocational classes (horticulture and employability skills). In addition, there is a computer lab available with software individualized for each student. Students select either special diploma, standard diploma, GED, or GED exit option when making diploma decisions. Two ESE students had recently graduated from the facilities program, one with a special diploma and one with a standard diploma.

The transition process as it is implemented at this facility includes a discussion of school options, what to expect when the student returns to school, communicating with the receiving school concerning the student prior to transition back to public school, contact with a community agency in the student's hometown, and discussion of the option to transition to a less restrictive facility with more vocational opportunities. This process is orchestrated by the guidance counselor with assistance from the general education teachers. The vocational teacher (horticulture) has also been successful in placing students in jobs in the community upon their release.

In summary, students at the Marion Intensive Treatment Center are served through a consultative model. Students may select from the following diploma options: special diploma, standard diploma, GED, and GED exit option. The transition process at this facility appears to be comprehensive in nature and effectively implemented.

### **Student Record Reviews**

A total of 33 student records of students with disabilities and two records of students identified as gifted, randomly selected from the population of exceptional students, were reviewed from schools in Marion County prior to the on-site visit.

Systemic findings are those that occur at a sufficient enough frequency that the monitoring team could reasonably infer a system-wide problem (25%). Of the 33 IEPs reviewed, systemic findings were noted in the following areas:

- inadequate present level of educational performance statements (25)
- inadequate statements indicating how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum (15)
- lack of a majority of measurable annual goals (10)
- lack of evidence that the results of state or district assessment were considered (9)

In addition, the following areas of non-compliance appeared to be individual or non-systemic in nature (findings in 2 or more records):

- present level of performance, goals and objectives did not support services identified on IEP (8)
- lack of correspondence between annual goals and objectives and the needs identified in the present level of educational performance (7)
- lack of evidence of progress reports on annual goals provided to parents as often as progress reports to parents of nondisabled students (no progress reports were submitted for 6 records; 15 records did not include all progress reports through the end of the prior school year)
- lack of appropriate signatures on the IEP (LEA, special education teacher, interpreter of instructional implications, general education teacher, agency representative) (6)
- inadequate short-term objectives (6)
- lack of evidence that the results of the most recent evaluation were considered (6)
- inadequate statement describing why student will not take state or district assessment (5)
- lack of description of the purpose of the meeting (4)

- lack of statement indicating how the student's progress toward annual goals will be measured (4)
- progress reports did not describe the extent to which students were expected to meet annual goals (4)
- lack of evidence that all transition areas were addressed in transition IEP (4)
- lack of explanation of the extent to which the student will not participate with non-disabled peers (3)
- lack of identification of special education services (2)
- progress reports did not describe progress toward annual goals (2)
- lack of evidence that the concerns of the parent were considered in the development of the IEP (2)

Thirteen of the 33 records reviewed had at least one goal that was not measurable. For other students, goals could be considered measurable; however they did not clearly delineate the progress that can be expected in a year. For 10 of the 33 students a majority of the goals were not measurable, and IEP teams must be reconvened to address this finding. The district was notified during the on-site monitoring visit of the specific students requiring reconvened IEP meetings. There were no records requiring fund adjustments.

Of the two EPs reviewed, both failed to indicate evaluation criteria, evaluation procedures, and evaluation schedules for student outcomes. Though EPs identified strengths of students in the present level statements, they failed to identify weaknesses.

During the on-site visit, seven records including matrices for students identified as a level 254 or 255 were reviewed for compliance. Of the records reviewed for matrix reporting, five IEPs did not support the level of services reported. Due to the significance and nature of this finding, the district was required to address the issue prior to the completion of this report. Under separate cover, the district was provided with instructions regarding a review of a sample of matrices, including the process for corrections to be submitted to the DOE through the Automated Student Information Database. The original date for completion of these activities was December 31, 2003. This date was extended to January 15, 2004 at district request, in order to provide ample opportunity for a thorough review of the records. The district reviewed 35 records through this process, and has submitted revised matrix levels for 29 students.

In summary, individual or non-systemic findings for student IEPs were noted in 19 areas. Systemic findings were identified in seven areas. Ten IEP teams are required to reconvene due to a lack of a majority of measurable annual goals. There were no funding adjustments as a result of the IEP reviews. EPs failed to identify student weaknesses as well as evaluation criteria, procedures, and schedules. Findings related to matrices require corrective actions through review and revision of student data reported to the DOE. This finding was addressed under separate cover, and resulted in revised matrix levels for 29 students.

### **District Forms Review**

Forms representing the thirteen areas identified below were submitted to Bureau staff for a review to determine compliance with federal and state laws. Findings were noted in six of the areas, and changes are required on those forms. The district was notified of the specific findings

via a separate letter dated July 14, 2003. A detailed explanation of the specific findings may be found in appendix E.

- *Parent Notification of Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting*
- *IEP forms\**
- *Notice and Consent for Initial Placement\**
- *Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation*
- *Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation*
- *Notification of Change of Placement\**
- *Notification of Change of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)\**
- *Informed Notice of Refusal*
- *Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination\**
- *Informed Notice of Dismissal\**
- *Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement\**
- *Summary of Procedural Safeguards*
- *Annual Notice of Confidentiality\**

\* indicates findings that require immediate attention

## **District Response**

In response to these findings, the district is required to develop a system improvement plan for submission to the Bureau. This plan must include activities and strategies intended to address specific findings, as well as measurable evidence of change. In developing the system improvement plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement activities resulting from this focused monitoring report to the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. Following is the format for the system improvement plan, including a listing of the critical issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement.

During the course of conducting the focused monitoring activities, including daily debriefings with the monitoring team and district staff, it is often the case that suggestions and/or recommendations related to interventions or strategies are proposed. Listings of these recommendations as well as specific discretionary projects and DOE contacts available to provide technical assistance to the district in the development and implementation of the plan are included following the plan format.

## Marion County School District Focused Monitoring System Improvement Plan

This section includes the issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement. The district is required to provide system improvement strategies to address identified findings, which may include an explanation of specific activities the district has committed to implementing, or it may consist of a broader statement describing planned strategies. For each issue, the plan also must define the measurable evidence of whether or not the desired outcome has been achieved. Target dates that extend for more than one year should include benchmarks in order to track interim progress. Findings identified as “ESE” are those findings that reflect issues specific to ESE students. Findings identified as “All” are those findings that reflect issues related to the student population as a whole, including ESE students.

A district self-assessment report is an integral part of the following system improvement plan. This self-assessment must include a random sampling of appropriate student records, staff trainings, IEP team meetings, or other pertinent activity. The district must use the sample to evaluate the effectiveness of a given strategy or intervention, and report the results of this evaluation at least annually. In addition, the district will be required to report semi-annually on the strategies and interventions implemented during the reporting period.

31

<b>Category</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>ESE</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>System Improvement Strategy</b>	<b>Evidence of Change and Target Date</b>
General Information	1. The data reporting process related to time with nondisabled peers is not implemented consistently across the district.	X		Develop new form for uniform use. New form will be distributed to all Staffing Specialists and will be available at all schools during 2004.	District report of self-assessment reveals that all schools accurately report time with nondisabled peers for students with disabilities.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Service Delivery Options	Addressed under “Access to the General Curriculum/Resources”				

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Decision-Making	2. Teachers in several schools reported that placement is decided by the staffing specialist.		X	Training for Staffing Specialists and teachers on committee decision making process, including that one role of the Staffing Specialist is to ensure compliance with all local, state, and federal requirements related to least restrictive environment.	<p>Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the topic or skills addressed.</p> <p>Staff will conduct observations of IEP team meetings.</p> <p>District report of self-assessment reveals that placement decisions are based on input from all participants.</p> <p>June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005</p>
	3. Some staff stated that only ESE teachers are able to meet the needs of students with disabilities, although the needs cited were not always specific to the disabilities.		X	Continue training of schools in serving students with disabilities in inclusive settings, effective instruction for students with diverse needs, and the use of instructional accommodations and modifications.	<p>Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the skills addressed.</p> <p>June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Decision-Making (continued)	4. Decisions regarding participation in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) are not based on state board rule delineating exemption criteria.		X	IEP teams will follow state board rule delineating exemption.  Provide training to administrators, Staffing Specialists, and teachers on exemption criteria, including use of FCAT exemption worksheet/form disseminated by the Bureau.	District report of self-assessment reveals that FCAT exemption criteria are appropriately applied.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
	5. It was reported that there is often a lack of communication between schools for students articulating from elementary to middle or middle to high school, which hinders the decision-making process.	X		Articulation forms will be developed to support the process and procedures for students articulating from one level to another; training will be provided in the use of the form.  Staffing Specialists will schedule meetings with schools for articulation.	Staff will review records and/or survey/interview IEP team participants regarding the articulation process.  District report of self-assessment reveals that articulation forms are used by IEP teams to aid in information gathering and decision-making.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Access to the General Curriculum/Resources	6. The use of a parallel curriculum in ESE classes that mirrors the instruction in general education classes provides access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities, but limits their time with nondisabled peers	X		School administrators and staff will be trained on curriculum and the inclusion process, including the use of supports and services that would allow students with disabilities to be served in the general class setting (e.g., Learning Strategies or Unique	Staff will review records and/or survey/interview IEP team participants at targeted schools.  District report of self-

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Access to the General Curriculum/Resources (continued)	(e.g. Dunnellon Middle School; Howard Middle School; Belleview High School, Dunnellon Middle School).			Skill courses; consultative services; co-taught classes).  Training will target schools that use a parallel curriculum model.	assessment reveals that all appropriate supports and services were considered prior to enrolling a student in an ESE-only section of a course.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Staff Development	7. Many respondents requested that additional training be provided in inclusion and inclusive strategies, with a focus on hands-on learning rather than informational sessions.	X		Develop district-wide inclusion plan.  Continue to provide training to administrators and staff on inclusion practices and the benefits of inclusion, including follow-up training for staff currently implementing an inclusive model.	Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the skills addressed.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Parental Involvement	None noted.				
Stakeholder Opinions	8. Respondents cited the existence of an underlying climate or culture within the district that strongly encourages "ownership" of ESE students by ESE teachers.	X		Continue to provide training to administrators and staff on inclusion practices and the benefits of inclusion.  Continue training of schools in serving students with disabilities in inclusive settings, effective instruction for students with diverse	Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the topic or skills addressed.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Stakeholder Opinions (continued)				needs, and the use of instructional accommodations and modifications.	June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Gifted Services	9. High school students are served through a consultative model that focuses on guidance activities.	X		The district will continue to work with Bureau staff to review and revise the high school gifted program to ensure that the individual needs of each student, and which are the result of the student's giftedness, are addressed.	District report of self-assessment describes a gifted program for high school students that addresses needs specific to the individual gifted students.  Staff will review records and/or survey/interview EP team participants regarding identifying and addressing individual student needs.  June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
	10. Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of gifted students in general education classes is not consistently provided.		X	Continue to provide inservice training to teachers of gifted students related to differentiated instruction and the use of a parallel curriculum.  Peer training of general education teachers will be provided (ongoing).	Review of pre- and post-training surveys of participants reveals an increased understanding and implementation of the skills addressed.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Gifted Services (continued)					June 30, 2004 June 30, 2005
Services to ESE Students in Charter Schools	None noted.				
Services to Students in DJJ Facilities	None noted.				
Records Reviews	<p>11. Systemic findings on IEPs were identified in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inadequate present level of educational performance statements</li> <li>• inadequate statements indicating how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum</li> <li>• lack of a majority of measurable annual goals</li> <li>• lack of evidence that the results of state or district assessment were considered</li> </ul>	X		<p>IEP training will be provided to ESE staff (on-going during 2004-05).</p> <p>Materials used for training will include "Developing Quality IEPs" and other materials developed and disseminated by the Bureau.</p> <p>Training will focus on the areas identified through the monitoring process as areas of need.</p> <p>New forms will be developed to meet the requirements of compliance.</p> <p>District and school-level staff will be trained on the use of the new forms.</p>	<p>District staff will review a sampling of IEPs from all schools, using the Bureau's work papers and source book for IEP reviews.</p> <p>District report of self-assessment reveals that all IEPs meet the requirements for compliance.</p> <p>June 2004 June 2005</p>
	12. Ten IEPs with a lack of majority of measurable annual goals were required to be reconvened.	X		Meetings were held and new IEPs with measurable annual goals sent to DOE	January 2004

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Records Reviews (continued)	13. Five IEPs reviewed through the matrix review process did not support the level of services reported.	X		<p>The district conducted a self-assessment of 35 IEPs, and submitted corrections for 29 of those records in January 2004.</p> <p>The district will review the matrix system to determine which staff will be delegated to develop the matrix for individual student IEPs.</p> <p>Training will be provided to the designated staff to ensure application of appropriate standards.</p>	<p>District staff will review a sampling of IEPs reported at a matrix level of 254 or 255.</p> <p>District report of self-assessment reveals that all matrices meet the requirements for IEP content and services provided.</p> <p>June 2004 June 2005</p>
Forms Reviews	<p>14. Revisions were required for the following forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEP Forms</li> <li>• Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</li> <li>• Notification of Change of Placement</li> <li>• Notification of Change of FAPE</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Dismissal</li> <li>• Notice of Ineligibility</li> <li>• Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination</li> </ul>	X		Develop new forms to comply with monitoring compliance issues; develop a Policy and Procedures manual for use of forms for ESE Staff.	<p>Forms to be submitted to the Bureau for review and approval.</p> <p>June 2004</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Notice of Confidentiality</li> </ul>		X	The district is developing a student handbook for each level	To be disseminated in the student handbooks.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
Forms Reviews (continued)				(elementary, middle, and high school), to include revisions to this notice.	Fall 2004

## **Recommendations and Technical Assistance**

As a result of the focused monitoring activities conducted in Marion County during the week of September 8, 2003, the Bureau has identified specific findings related to the key data indicator, which is percentage of students with disabilities in regular class placement. The following are recommendations for the district to consider when developing the system improvement plan and determining strategies that are most likely to effect change. The list is not all-inclusive. These recommendations do not represent required activities; rather, they are intended only as a starting point for discussion among the parties responsible for the development of the plan. A partial listing of technical assistance resources also is provided. These resources may be of assistance in the development and/or implementation of the system improvement plan.

### **Recommendations**

- Request assistance from the Bureau's Program Evaluation section to ensure that student placement (percent of time removed from general education) is reported accurately at the school and district levels.
- Continue to implement and expand current initiatives that provide for inclusive placement for students with disabilities.
- Review the course options at the middle and high school levels to evaluate the extent and appropriateness of the use of parallel curricula, including remedial courses.
- Encourage the inclusion of a component related to instruction and placement of students with disabilities in the school improvement plans of individual schools.
- Develop a formal method for articulation planning for students transitioning from elementary to middle school and middle to high school.
- Provide technical assistance and training to IEP team members regarding the requirements for FCAT participation delineated in Rule 6A-6.10943, FAC.
- Include a component in the district's IEP training program to address the roles of the IEP team members and ensure that all members of the IEP team realize the necessity of providing input into the decision-making process.
- Continue to provide training on the value of students with disabilities participating in the regular education environment; encourage discussion among ESE and general education teachers regarding placement opportunities.
- As the inclusion initiative is expanded across the district, continue to provide intensive training on effective practices to all affected staff (initial and follow-up training); evaluate the effectiveness of the training to target continuing areas of need.
- Provide matrix training to staff responsible for completing this document, using the review packet provided to the district for conducting self-assessments of matrices; include all ESE teachers in the training.
- Provide training to general education teachers on the characteristics and needs of gifted students, including the use of differentiated instruction.

## **Technical Assistance**

### **Florida Inclusion Network**

Website: <http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com/>

The project provides learning opportunities, consultation, information and support to educators, families, and community members, resulting in the inclusion of all students. They provide technical assistance on literacy strategies, curriculum adaptations, suggestions for resource allocations and expanding models of service delivery, positive behavioral supports, ideas on differentiating instruction, and suggestions for building and maintaining effective school teams.

### **Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services**

In addition to the special projects described above, Bureau staff are available for assistance on a variety of topics. Following is a partial list of contacts.

#### **Behavior/Discipline**

##### **EH/SED**

Lee Clark  
(850) 245-0478

##### **Gifted**

Donnajo Smith  
(850) 245-0478

##### **Mentally Handicapped/Autism**

Sheryl Brainerd  
(850) 245-0478

##### **SLD, ADD/ADHD, IEPs**

Paul Gallaher  
(850) 245-0478

##### **Clearinghouse Information Center**

cicbiscs@FLDOE.org

##### **ESE Program Monitoring (Compliance)**

Eileen Amy  
Kim Komisar  
Gail Best  
David Katcher  
April Katine  
Barbara MacAnelly  
(850) 245-0476

##### **Program Evaluation (Data Reporting)**

Karen Denbroeder  
Marie LaCap  
(850) 245-0475

**APPENDIX A:**  
**DEVELOPMENT OF THE MONITORING PROCESS**



## **Development of the Monitoring Process 1999-2003**

With guidance from a work group of parent, school and district representatives and members of the State Advisory Committee for Exceptional Students, substantial revisions to Bureau monitoring practices were initiated during the 1999-2000 school year. The shift to a focused monitoring approach began at the national level, with the monitoring of state departments of education by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The revisions reflect a change in the focus of the monitoring process from one that relies primarily on procedural compliance to one that focuses on improved outcomes for students with disabilities, as measured by key data indicators. As a result of the efforts of the monitoring stakeholders' workgroup, three types of monitoring processes were established as part of the Florida DOE's system of exceptional student education monitoring and oversight. Those monitoring activities were identified as focused monitoring, random monitoring, and continuous improvement monitoring.

Beginning in 1999, Bureau staff and the stakeholders' workgroup developed a system whereby districts would be selected for monitoring based on their performance on key data indicators related to student performance, and the monitoring activities would focus on determining the root cause of the district's performance on that indicator. The following key data indicators were recommended by the monitoring restructuring work group and were adopted for implementation by the Bureau. The identified indicators and the sources of the data used are

- percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their non-disabled peers) [Data source: Survey 9]
- dropout rate for students with disabilities [Data source: Survey 5]
- percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma [Data source: Survey 5]
- participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities [Data sources: performance data from the assessment files and Survey 3 enrollment data]

While districts were selected for focused monitoring based on their performance on key data indicators, they were randomly selected for the more procedural/ compliance-oriented random monitoring process. All 67 districts participate in the continuous improvement monitoring process. The focused monitoring activities applied only to students with disabilities, while random monitoring and continuous improvement monitoring involved both students with disabilities and students identified as gifted.

The change to the monitoring process also resulted in an adjustment to what is considered a "monitoring year." Historically, compliance monitoring activities in the state have been conducted in a cycle, and over the course of a school year. While the collection and analysis of data and implementation of system improvement plans for the continuous improvement monitoring process continue to be based on the traditional school year (e.g. 2002-03), the quality assurance visits conducted by the Bureau are conducted over the course of a calendar year (e.g., January to December, 2003).

During the transition year of 1999-2000 districts were asked to conduct extensive self-evaluations. Beginning in the 2000-01 school year, the focused monitoring process was

instituted. Four districts were selected for focused monitoring during the 2001 pilot year: Jackson County– standard diploma rate; Lee County– dropout rate; Osceola County– participation in statewide assessment; and, Taylor County– regular class placement.

During the 2002 monitoring cycle, seven districts were chosen for focused monitoring visits based on their state rankings, and three districts were selected at random for the more procedural/compliance-oriented random monitoring. The districts and the indicators they were selected on are as follows: Polk and Gadsden Counties – dropout rate; Madison and Franklin Counties – participation in statewide assessment; and, Dade and Lafayette Counties – regular class placement. Bradford County was selected on the basis of standard diploma rate, but that visit was changed to a random monitoring visit when it was determined that data reporting errors had resulted in a significant misrepresentation of the district’s ranking. Charlotte, Glades, and Duval Counties also were selected for random monitoring.

The continuous improvement monitoring process began during the 2001-02 school year. At that time, school districts were asked to examine key data indicators for exceptional students and to self-select two indicators (one for students with disabilities and one for gifted students) to target for improvement. In the fall of 2001, districts were required to develop a plan to conduct an in-depth analysis during the 2001-02 school year of the selected data indicators for both populations, and to submit the plan to the Bureau for review and approval. While all districts were required to submit a plan for data collection during the initial year of continuous improvement monitoring, on-site visits by the Bureau were not conducted to review these activities.

For the 2002-2003 school year, based on the results of the data collection and analysis conducted during the 2001-02 school year, districts were required to submit continuous improvement monitoring plans (CIMPs) designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and for gifted students.

In an effort to utilize resources most effectively, activities related to random monitoring and continuous improvement monitoring visits have been consolidated. Therefore, during 2003 the Bureau is conducting on-site visits to eight districts chosen for focused monitoring based on key data indicators, and to two districts chosen at random for a review of the continuous improvement monitoring activities undertaken by the district. In addition, the Bureau will conduct follow-up visits to the four districts that participated in the focused monitoring process during 2001. Compliance reviews of selected policies, procedures, and student records are incorporated in varying degrees into all of the monitoring visits.

**APPENDIX B:**  
**DISTRICT DATA**





**Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services  
2003 LEA Profile**

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District: <b>Marion</b>	PK-12 Population: <b>39,689</b>
Enrollment Group: <b>20,000 to 40,000</b>	Percent Disabled: <b>17%</b>
	Percent Gifted: <b>3%</b>

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## Introduction

The LEA profile is intended to provide districts with a tool for use in planning for systemic improvement. The profile contains a series of data indicators that describe measures of educational benefit, educational environment, and prevalence for exceptional students. The data are presented for the district, districts of comparable size (enrollment group) and the state. Where appropriate and available, comparative data for general education students are included.

Data presented as indicators of **educational benefit** (*Section One*)

- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) participation and performance
- Standard diploma rate
- Dropout rate
- Retention rate

Data presented as indicators of **educational environment** (*Section Two*)

- Regular class / natural environment placement
- Separate class placement
- Discipline rates

Data presented as indicators of **prevalence** (*Section Three*)

- Student membership by race/ethnicity
- Gifted membership by free/reduced lunch and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) status
- Student membership in selected disabilities by race/ethnicity
- Selected disabilities as a percent of all disabilities and as a percent of total PK-12 population

Four of the indicators included in the profile, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) participation, graduation rate, dropout rate, and regular class placement, are also used in the selection of districts for focused monitoring. Indicators describing the prevalence and separate class placement of students identified as educable mentally handicapped (EMH) are included to correspond with provisions of the Bureau's partnership agreement with the Office for Civil Rights.

## Data Sources

The data contained in this profile were obtained from data submitted electronically by districts through the Department of Education Information Database in surveys 2, 9, 3 and 5 and from the assessment files. School year data are included for **1999-00** through **December 2002**.

## Section One: Educational Benefit

Educational benefit refers to the extent to which children benefit from their educational experience. Progression through and completion of school are dimensions of educational benefits as are post-school outcomes and indicators of consumer satisfaction. This section of the profile provides data on indicators of student performance and school completion.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) participation and performance data found in this section includes students who were reported in February (survey 3) **and** had a reported score on the multiple choice portion of the FCAT for the 1999-00, 2000-01, and 2001-02 administrations. (Scores are not reported in cases where the student identification number is missing, incorrect or where the student did not attempt to answer the test questions.) Students who had a reported FCAT score but were not reported in February (survey 3) are not included. Data for students with disabilities and students who are gifted includes only students with a primary exceptionality reported in February (survey 3). Students who had a reported FCAT score but did not have a primary exceptionality in February are not included in the disabled or gifted data. The statewide student match rate for students with disabilities and students identified as gifted in February (survey 3) and the FCAT files was between 98 and 99 percent across the reported grade levels.

### Participation Rate in Statewide Assessments:

The number of students with disabilities reported in February (survey 3) who had a reported FCAT score divided by the total number enrolled during February (survey 3) of the same year. The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **1999-00** through **2001-02**.

Grade 3 Participation FCAT Math			Marion Enrollment Group State	Grade 3 Participation FCAT Reading		
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
*	81%	79%		*	80%	80%
*	85%	87%		*	85%	87%
*	85%	87%	*	85%	87%	

Grade 5 Participation FCAT Math			Marion Enrollment Group State	Grade 4 Participation FCAT Reading		
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
85%	81%	89%		79%	83%	84%
85%	85%	88%		83%	86%	87%
84%	85%	88%	83%	85%	88%	

Grade 8 Participation FCAT Math			Marion Enrollment Group State	Grade 8 Participation FCAT Reading		
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
80%	70%	76%		79%	71%	75%
79%	79%	82%		79%	79%	82%
76%	76%	80%	76%	76%	80%	

Grade 10 Participation FCAT Math			Marion Enrollment Group State	Grade 10 Participation FCAT Reading		
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
51%	50%	53%		51%	52%	54%
61%	62%	62%		61%	62%	63%
58%	59%	62%	58%	59%	62%	

\* Not administered in 1999-00.

\*\* Reported number participating exceeds enrollment.

## Performance on Statewide Assessments: FCAT Reading

The following tables show the percent of students in the district scoring at Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 and above on the **2000-01** and **2001-02** FCAT for students with disabilities, all students, and gifted students. The bars in the graph display the percent of students in the district scoring at or above achievement level 3 for **2000-01** and **2001-02**.

	Grade 3 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	nr	61%	nr	13%	nr	26%
all students	nr	25%	nr	15%	nr	60%
gifted students	nr	0%	nr	1%	nr	99%

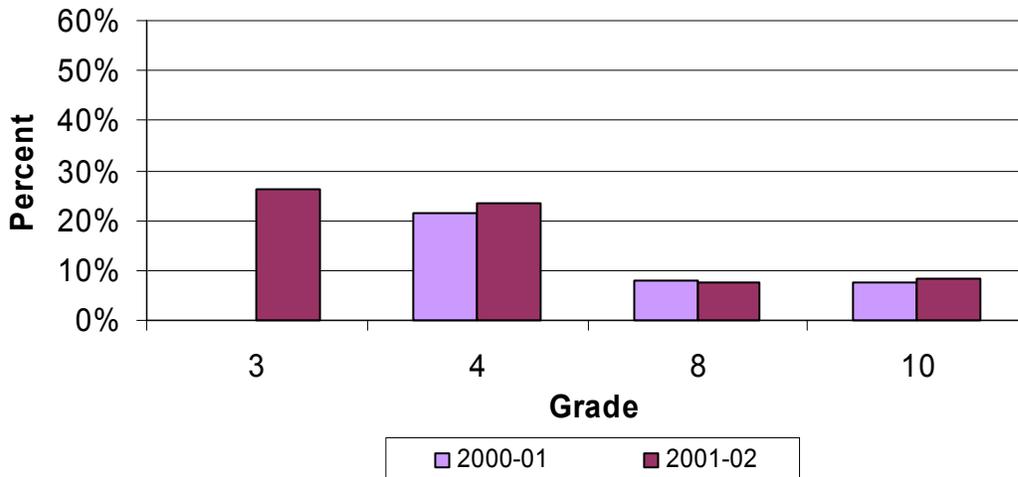
	Grade 4 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	67%	65%	11%	12%	22%	23%
all students	29%	30%	17%	16%	54%	54%
gifted students	2%	3%	<1%	2%	97%	95%

	Grade 8 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	77%	76%	15%	16%	8%	8%
all students	31%	30%	26%	28%	44%	42%
gifted students	0%	2%	4%	5%	96%	93%

	Grade 10 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	74%	75%	18%	16%	7%	8%
all students	27%	33%	32%	35%	41%	32%
gifted students	0%	1%	12%	16%	88%	82%

nr = not reported

### Percent of Students with Disabilities at Achievement Level 3 or Higher FCAT Reading



# Performance on Statewide Assessments: FCAT Math

Grade 3 Achievement Level							
		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
		2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities		nr	53%	nr	18%	nr	29%
all students		nr	22%	nr	20%	nr	57%
gifted students		nr	0%	nr	0%	nr	100%

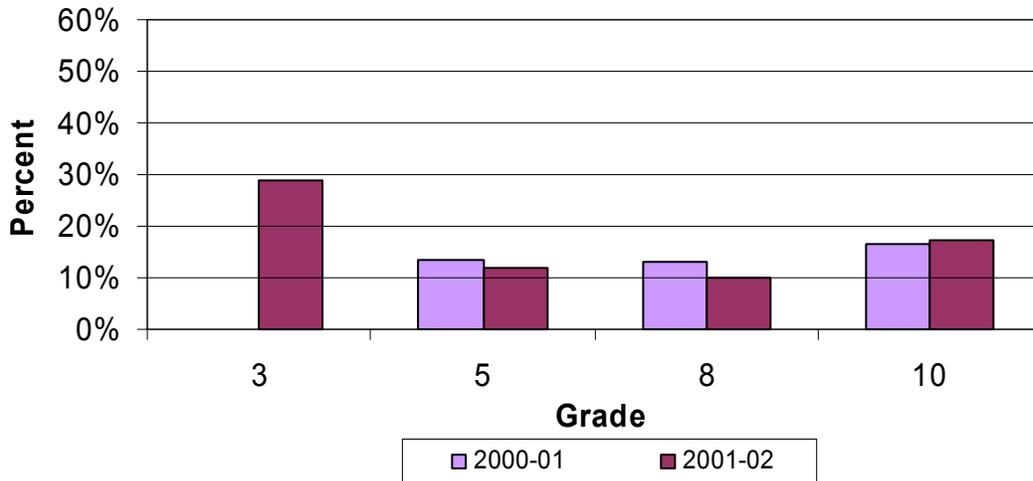
Grade 5 Achievement Level							
		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
		2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities		69%	64%	18%	24%	13%	12%
all students		29%	26%	27%	30%	44%	44%
gifted students		0%	0%	2%	4%	98%	96%

Grade 8 Achievement Level							
		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
		2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities		69%	76%	18%	14%	13%	10%
all students		25%	28%	22%	23%	52%	49%
gifted students		0%	0%	<1%	3%	99%	97%

Grade 10 Achievement Level							
		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
		2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities		56%	62%	27%	20%	17%	17%
all students		16%	20%	19%	23%	65%	57%
gifted students		0%	<1%	<1%	2%	99%	97%

nr = not reported

**Percent of Students with Disabilities at Achievement Level 3 or Higher  
FCAT Math**



### Standard Diploma Graduation Rate:

The number of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma (withdrawal code W06) divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education (withdrawal codes W06-10, W27) as reported in end of year survey 5. The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **1999-00** through **2001-02**.

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Marion	33%	24%	35%
Enrollment Group	57%	50%	55%
State	56%	51%	48%

### Retention Rate:

The number of students retained divided by the total year enrollment as reported in end of year survey 5. Total enrollment is the count of all students who attended school at any time during the school year. The results are reported for students with disabilities and all PK-12 students for **2001-02**.

		2001-02	
		Students with Disabilities	All Students
Marion		6%	5%
Enrollment Group		7%	5%
State		7%	6%

### Dropout Rate:

The number of students grades 9-12 for whom a dropout withdrawal reason (DNE, W05, W11, W13-W23) was reported, divided by the total enrollment of grade 9-12 students and students who did not enter school as expected (DNEs) as reported in end of year survey 5. The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities, all PK-12 students, and gifted students for the years **1999-00** through **2001-02**.

		Students with Disabilities		
		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Marion		7%	7%	5%
Enrollment Group		6%	5%	4%
State		6%	5%	5%

		All Students		
		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Marion		4%	4%	3%
Enrollment Group		4%	3%	3%
State		5%	4%	3%

		Gifted Students		
		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Marion		<1%	0%	0%
Enrollment Group		<1%	<1%	<1%
State		<1%	<1%	<1%

## Section Two: Educational Environment

Educational environment refers to the extent to which students with disabilities receive special education and related services in natural environments, classes or schools with their nondisabled peers. This section of the profile provides data on indicators of educational environments.

### Regular Class Placement, Ages 6-21:

The number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 who spend 80 percent or more of their school week with nondisabled peers divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

		2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Marion Enrollment Group State	Marion	30%	36%	39%
	Enrollment Group	52%	54%	55%
	State	48%	48%	48%

### Natural Environments, Ages 3-5:

The number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 who receive all of their special education and related services in educational programs designed primarily for children without disabilities or in their home divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

		2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Marion Enrollment Group State	Marion	<1%	1%	3%
	Enrollment Group	6%	7%	9%
	State	6%	7%	7%

### Separate Class Placement of EMH Students, Ages 6-21:

The number of students ages 6-21 identified as educable mentally handicapped who spend less than 40 percent of their day with nondisabled peers divided by the total number of EMH students reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for three years from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

		2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Marion Enrollment Group State	Marion	47%	52%	45%
	Enrollment Group	61%	61%	62%
	State	61%	62%	61%

### Discipline Rates:

The number of students who served in-school or out-of-school suspensions, were expelled, or moved to alternative placement at any time during the school year divided by the total year enrollment as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities and nondisabled students for **2001-02**.

		2001-02							
		In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions		Alternative Placement *	
		Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students						
Marion Enrollment Group State	Marion	13%	10%	19%	11%	0%	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Enrollment Group	11%	7%	13%	6%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
	State	13%	8%	15%	7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

\* Student went through expulsion process but was offered alternative placement.

## Section Three: Prevalence

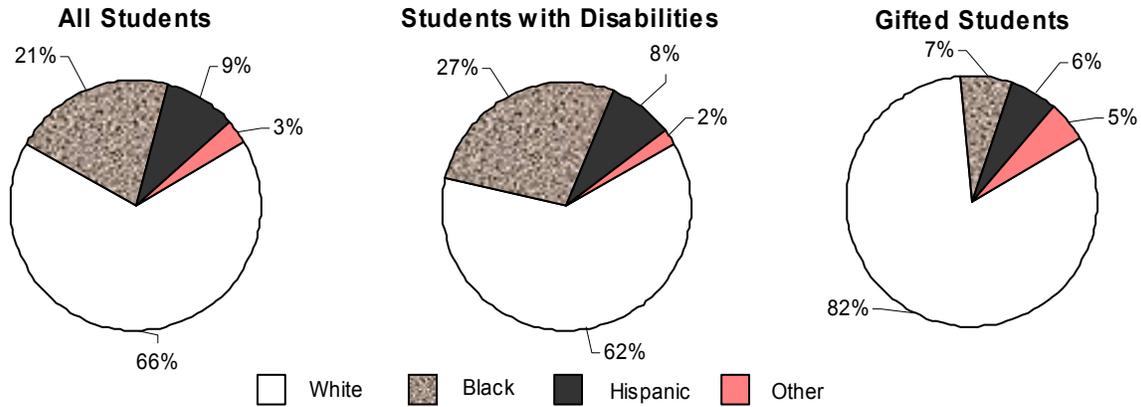
Prevalence refers to the proportion of the PK-12 population identified as exceptional at any given point in time. This section of the profile provides prevalence data by demographic characteristics.

### Student Membership by Racial/Ethnic Category:

The three columns on the left show the statewide racial/ethnic distribution for all PK-12 students, all students with disabilities, and all gifted students as reported in **October 2002** (survey 2). Statewide, there is a larger percentage of black students in the disabled population than in the total PK-12 population (28 percent vs. 24 percent) and a smaller percentage of black students in the gifted population (10 percent vs. 24 percent). Similar data for the district are reported in the three right hand columns and displayed in the graphs.

	State			District		
	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Gifted Students	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Gifted Students
White	51%	52%	64%	66%	62%	82%
Black	24%	28%	10%	21%	27%	7%
Hispanic	21%	17%	19%	9%	8%	6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	<1%	4%	<1%	<1%	3%
Am Ind/Alaskan Nat	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Multiracial	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%

### District Membership by Race/Ethnicity



### Free/Reduced Lunch and LEP:

The percent of all students and all gifted students in the district and the state on free/reduced lunch. The percent of all students and all gifted students in the district and in the state who are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). These percentages are based on data reported in **October 2002** (survey 2).

	State		District	
	All Students	Gifted Students	All Students	Gifted Students
Free / Reduced Lunch	44%	20%	52%	21%
LEP	12%	3%	4%	<1%

### Selected Disabilities by Racial/Ethnic Category:

Racial/ethnic data for all students as well as students with a primary disability of specific learning disabled (SLD), emotionally handicapped or severely emotionally disturbed (EH/SED), and educable mentally handicapped (EMH) are presented below. The data are presented for the state and the district as reported in **October 2002** (survey 2).

	All Students		SLD		EH/SED		EMH	
	State	District	State	District	State	District	State	District
White	51%	66%	54%	63%	48%	60%	33%	42%
Black	24%	21%	24%	25%	39%	33%	53%	50%
Hispanic	21%	9%	20%	10%	11%	5%	13%	7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Am Ind/Alaskan Nat	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Multiracial	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	<1%	<1%

### Selected Disabilities as Percent of Disabled and PK-12 Populations:

The percentage of the total disabled population and the total population identified as SLD, EH or SED, EMH, and speech impaired (SI) for the district and for the state. Statewide, seven percent of the total population is identified as SLD and 46 percent of all students with disabilities are SLD. The data are presented for the district and state as reported in **October 2002** (survey 2).

	All Students		All Disabled	
	State	District	State	District
SLD	7%	8%	46%	45%
EH/SED	1%	2%	10%	11%
EMH	1%	2%	8%	11%
SI	2%	3%	14%	16%

### Districts in Marion's Enrollment Group:

Alachua, Bay, Clay, Collier, Lake, Leon, Manatee, Marion, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Sarasota, St. Johns, St. Lucie



The New Department of  
**Education**

Jim Horne, Commissioner

**Marion County School District  
Focused Monitoring Visit  
September 8-11, 2003**

**Districts Rank-ordered on Regular Class Placement for Students with Disabilities  
2001-02 School Year**

District	Size	6-21 ESE Population	#	%
Lafayette	S	110	22	20.0%
Miami Dade	LV	38,640	7,856	20.3%
Nassau	MS	1,624	497	30.6%
Franklin	S	197	63	32.0%
Marion	M	5,956	2,130	35.8%
Charlotte	MS	3,252	1,202	37.0%
Gadsden	MS	1,188	441	37.1%
Madison	S	752	281	37.4%
Citrus	MS	2,727	1,023	37.5%
Martin	MS	2,631	1,000	38.0%
Polk	L	12,207	4,763	39.0%
Hendry	MS	1,309	520	39.7%
Hillsborough	LV	23,648	9,492	40.1%
Taylor	S	607	246	40.5%
Calhoun	S	373	154	41.3%
Escambia	L	6,848	2,843	41.5%
Dixie	S	432	184	42.6%
Suwannee	S	685	292	42.6%
Bay	M	4,466	1,911	42.8%
Holmes	S	514	222	43.2%
Union	S	306	135	44.1%
Glades	S	183	81	44.3%
Gulf	S	317	141	44.5%
Jefferson	S	357	159	44.5%
Jackson	MS	1,377	623	45.2%
Alachua	M	5,012	2,268	45.3%
Volusia	L	10,268	4,660	45.4%
Walton	S	881	406	46.1%
Highlands	MS	1,996	920	46.1%
Columbia	MS	1,504	694	46.1%
Wakulla	S	753	348	46.2%
Washington	S	467	217	46.5%
Osceola	M	4,960	2,369	47.8%
St. Johns	M	2,982	1,433	48.1%

District	Size	6-21 ESE Population	#	%
Lee	L	8,730	4,094	46.9%
Gilchrist	S	496	240	48.4%
St. Lucie	M	4,100	1,987	48.5%
Hardee	S	985	495	50.3%
Seminole	L	7,331	3,715	50.7%
Indian River	MS	2,051	1,042	50.8%
Hamilton	S	334	170	50.9%
Palm Beach	LV	20,466	10,446	51.0%
Levy	S	1,235	631	51.1%
Sumter	S	1,116	574	51.4%
Monroe	MS	1,375	708	51.5%
Orange	LV	23,066	11,960	51.9%
Baker	S	490	260	53.1%
Clay	M	5,089	2,728	53.6%
DeSoto	S	833	448	53.8%
Putnam	MS	1,978	1,070	54.1%
Lake	M	4,721	2,587	54.8%
Pinellas	LV	19,033	10,659	56.0%
Hernando	MS	2,763	1,555	56.3%
Santa Rosa	M	3,532	2,037	57.7%
Brevard	L	9,932	5,790	58.3%
Leon	M	5,421	3,165	58.4%
Sarasota	M	6,117	3,591	58.7%
Okeechobee	S	1,226	728	59.4%
Pasco	L	9,407	5,589	59.4%
Bradford	S	871	521	59.8%
Manatee	M	6,956	4,171	60.0%
Duval	LV	18,645	11,353	60.9%
Flagler	S	1,174	726	61.8%
Collier	M	5,195	3,234	62.3%
Broward	LV	25,554	17,056	66.7%
Liberty	S	265	181	68.3%
Okaloosa	M	4,531	3,491	77.0%
<b>District</b>		<b>344,547</b>	<b>166,598</b>	<b>48.4%</b>



**APPENDIX C:**  
**ESE MONITORING TEAM MEMBERS**



**Marion County School District  
Focused Monitoring Visit  
September 8-11, 2003**

**ESE Monitoring Team Members**

**Department of Education Staff**

Shan Goff, Chief, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services  
Eileen Amy, Administrator, ESE Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance  
Kim Komisar, Program Director, Monitoring  
Iris Anderson, Program Specialist  
Gail Best, Program Specialist  
Rhonda Blake, Program Specialist  
April Katine, Program Specialist  
Donnajo Smith, Program Specialist

**Peer Reviewers**

James Fowler, Broward County Public Schools  
Deborah Johns, Polk County Public Schools  
Joanie Mayer, Seminole County Public Schools  
Joanne Rosen, Miami-Dade Public Schools

**Contracted Staff**

Batya Elbaum, Project Director, University of Miami  
Emily Joseph, University of Miami  
James Kohnstamm, University of Miami  
Christopher Sarno, University of Miami  
Hope Nieman, Consultant



**APPENDIX D:**  
**SURVEY RESULTS**



**Marion County School District  
2003 Parent Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of parents and families of exceptional students in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a survey for parents of students with disabilities as part of the Bureau's district monitoring activities.

In conjunction with the 2003 Marion County School District monitoring activities, the parent survey was sent to parents of the 6875 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 828 parents (PK, n = 61; K-5, n = 360; 6-8, n = 212; 9 - 12, n = 195) representing 12% of the sample, returned the survey. 779 surveys were returned as undeliverable, representing 11% of the sample.

Parents responded "yes" or "no" to each survey item, indicating that they either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents who agreed with the item.

**% Yes**

**Overall, I am satisfied with:**

- the way I am treated by school personnel. 86
- the amount of time my child spends with regular education students. 79
- the level of knowledge and experience of school personnel. 77
- the way special education teachers and regular education teachers work together. 75
- how quickly services are implemented following an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) decision. 75
- the exceptional education services my child receives. 74
- the effect of exceptional student education on my child's self-esteem. 73
- my child's academic progress. 70

**My child:**

- has friends at school. 91
- is usually happy at school. 84
- is aiming for a standard diploma. 83
- is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 82
- spends most of the school day involved in productive activities. 78

**At my child's IEP meetings we have talked about:**

- ways that my child could spend time with students in regular classes. 62
- whether my child would take the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test). 62

	<b>% Yes</b>
• which diploma my child may receive.*	61
• whether my child needed services beyond the regular school year.	61
• whether my child should get accommodations (special testing conditions), for example, extra time.	59
• about the requirements for different diplomas.*	52

**My child’s teachers:**

• are available to speak with me.	90
• expect my child to succeed.	89
• set appropriate goals for my child.	82
• give students with disabilities extra time or different assignments, if needed.	
• call me or send me notes about my child.	75
• give homework that meets my child's needs.	71

**My child’s school:**

• encourages me to participate in my child's education.	82
• makes sure I understand my child's IEP.	82
• encourages acceptance of students with disabilities.	80
• sends me information written in a way I understand.	80
• addresses my child's individual needs.	77
• does all it can to keep students from dropping out of school.	76
• wants to hear my ideas.	75
• offers students with disabilities the classes they need to graduate with a standard diploma.	73
• sends me information about activities and workshops for parents.	72
• involves students with disabilities in clubs, sports, or other activities.	70
• provides students with disabilities updated books and materials.	68
• explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's IEP.	66
• informs me about all of the services available to my child.	63
• offers a variety of vocational courses, such as computers and business technology.*	61
• provides information to students about education and jobs after high school.*	49

**Parent Participation**

• I have attended one or more meetings about my child during this school year.	89
• I am comfortable talking about my child with school staff.	88
• I participate in school activities with my child.	69
• I have used parent support services in my area.	27
• I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement.	25
• I am a member of the PTA/PTO.	22
• I belong to an organization for parents of students with disabilities.	14

\*These questions answered by parents of students grade 8 and above

**Marion County School District  
2003 Parent Survey Report  
Students Identified as Gifted**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of parents and families of exceptional students in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a survey for parent of gifted students as part of the Bureau's district monitoring activities.

In conjunction with the 2003 Marion County School District monitoring activities, the parent survey was sent to parents of the 1,360 students identified as gifted for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 365 parents (KG-5, n = 168; 6-8, n = 98; 9 - 12, n =99) representing 27% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 49 parents were returned as undeliverable, representing 4% of the sample.

Parents responded "yes" or "no" to each survey item, indicating that they either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents who agreed with the item.

	<b>% Yes</b>
<b>Overall, I am satisfied with:</b>	
• the effect of gifted services on my child's self-esteem.	89
• my child's academic progress.	85
• gifted teachers' expertise in teaching students identified as gifted.	85
• regular teachers' subject area knowledge.	82
• the gifted services my child receives.	74
• how quickly services were implemented following an initial request for evaluation.	70
• regular teachers' expertise in teaching students identified as gifted.	64
<b>In regular classes, my child:</b>	
• has friends at school.	97
• is learning skills that will be useful later on in life.	90
• is usually happy at school.	89
• has his/her social and emotional needs met at school.	87
• has creative outlets at school.	73
• is academically challenged at school.	59
<b>In gifted classes, my child:</b>	
• has friends at school.	97
• is usually happy at school.	92

	<b>% Yes</b>
• has his/her social and emotional needs met at school.	92
• is learning skills that will be useful later on in life.	91
• has creative outlets at school.	87
• is academically challenged at school.	84

**My child's regular teachers:**

• expect appropriate behavior.	97
• are available to speak with me.	92
• provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups.	80
• have access to the latest information and technology.	77
• set appropriate goals for my child.	76
• give homework that meets my child's needs.	76
• relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits.	66
• call me or send me notes about my child.	59

**My child's gifted teachers:**

• expect appropriate behavior.	97
• are available to speak with me.	92
• set appropriate goals for my child.	88
• have access to the latest information and technology.	84
• provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups.	83
• relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits.	80
• give homework that meets my child's needs.	75
• call me or send me notes about my child.	61

**My child's home school:**

• treats me with respect.	94
• sends me information written in a way I understand.	84
• encourages me to participate in my child's education.	84
• sends me information about activities and workshops for parents.	80
• wants to hear my ideas.	76
• addresses my child's individual needs.	71
• makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP.	69
• involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP).	67
• provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials.	66
• informs me about all of the services available to my child.	60
• implements my ideas.	57

**%Yes**

- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP. 54

**My child's 2nd School:**

- treats me with respect. 95
- encourages me to participate in my child's education. 86
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 86
- addresses my child's individual needs. 83
- wants to hear my ideas. 75
- provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials. 75
- makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP. 71
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 71
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 67
- involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP). 65
- implements my ideas. 63
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP. 58

**Students identified as gifted: (primarily for high school students)**

- are provided with information about options for education after high school. 84
- are provided with career counseling. 81
- are provided with the opportunity to participate in externships or mentorships. 77
- have the option of taking a variety of vocational courses. 64

**Parent Participation**

- I participate in school activities with my child. 87
- I have attended one or more meetings about my child during this school year. 85
- I am a member of the PTA/PTO. 45
- I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement. 30
- I have used parent support services in my area. 12
- I belong to an organization for parents of students identified as gifted. 7

**Marion County School District  
2003 Student Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities**

In order to obtain the perspective of students with disabilities who receive services from public school districts, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a student survey as part of the Bureau's focused monitoring activities.

In conjunction with the 2003 Marion County School District monitoring activities, a sufficient number of surveys were provided to allow all students with disabilities, grades 9-12, to respond. Instructions for administration of the survey by classroom teachers, including a written script, were provided for each class or group of students. Since participation in this survey is not appropriate for some students whose disabilities might impair their understanding of the survey, professional judgment is to be used to determine appropriate participation.

Surveys were received from 567 students, representing approximately 29% of students with disabilities in grades 9-12 in the district. Data are from 4 (44%) of the district's 9 schools with students in grades 9-12.

	<b>% Yes</b>
<b>I am taking the following ESE classes:</b>	
• English	85
• Math	73
• Science	57
• Social Studies	49
• Electives (physical education, art, music)	18
• Vocational (woodshop, computers)	16
<b>At my school:</b>	
• ESE teachers believe that ESE students can learn.	85
• ESE teachers give students extra help, if needed.	81
• ESE teachers teach students in ways that help them learn.	78
• ESE teachers give students extra time or different assignments, if needed.	74
• ESE teachers understand ESE students' needs.	71
• ESE teachers teach students things that will be useful later on in life.	71
• ESE teachers provide ESE students with updated books and materials.	52
<b>I am taking the following regular/mainstream classes:</b>	
• Electives (physical education, art, music)	59
• Vocational (woodshop, computers)	46
• Science	24

	<b>%Yes</b>
• Social Studies	23
• Math	22
• English	17

**The following section was filled out by students who are taking any regular/mainstream classes.**

**At my school:**

• Regular education teachers believe that ESE students can learn.	67
• Regular education teachers teach ESE students things that will be useful later on in life.	65
• Regular education teachers give ESE students extra help if needed.	54
• Regular education teachers teach ESE students in ways that help them learn.	53
• Regular education teachers understand ESE students' needs.	50
• Regular education teachers give ESE students extra time or different assignments if needed.	42

**At my school, ESE students:**

• get work experience (on-the-job training) if they are interested.	80
• get the help they need to well in school.	79
• are encouraged to stay in school.	78
• participate in clubs, sports, and other activities.	78
• can take vocational classes such as computers and business technology.	77
• fit in at school.	76
• get information about education after high school.	71
• are treated fairly by teachers and staff.	65
• spend enough time with regular education students.	60

**Diploma Option**

• I know the difference between a regular and a special diploma.	88
• I know what courses I have to take to get my diploma.	81
• I agree with the type of diploma I am going to receive.	78
• I had a say in the decision about which diploma I would get.	72
• I will probably graduate with a regular diploma.	62

**IEP**

• I was invited to attend my IEP meeting this year.	65
• I had a say in the decision about which classes I would take.	62
• I attended my IEP meeting this year.	60

**% Yes**

- I had a say in the decision about special testing conditions I might get for the FCAT or other tests. 41
- I had a say in the decision about whether I need to take the FCAT or a different test. 31

**FCAT**

- Teachers help ESE students prepare for the FCAT. 69
- I took the FCAT this year. 69
- In my English/reading classes, we work on the kinds of skills that are tested on the reading part of the FCAT. 64
- In my math classes, we work on the kinds of problems that are tested on the math part of the FCAT. 60
- I received accommodations (special testing conditions) for the FCAT. 48

**Marion County School District  
2003 Teacher Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of the service providers of students with disabilities in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a teacher survey in conjunction with the Bureau's district monitoring activities.

Surveys developed for teachers and other service providers were mailed to each school, with a memo explaining the key data indicator and the monitoring process. All teachers, both general education and ESE, were provided an opportunity to respond. Surveys were returned from 869 teachers representing approximately 36% of ESE and general education teachers in the district. Data are from 36 (73%) of Marion's 49 schools.

Teachers responded "consistently," "to some extent," "minimally," or "not at all" to each survey item. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents reported that it consistently occurs.

**% Consistently**

**To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school:**

- places students with disabilities into general education classes whenever possible. 63
- ensures that students with disabilities feel comfortable when taking classes with general education students. 61
  - modifies and adapts curriculum for students as needed. 59
  - addresses each student's individual needs. 57
  - ensures that the general education curriculum is taught in ESE classes to the maximum extent possible. 51
  - encourages collaboration among ESE teachers, GE teachers and service providers. 41
  - offers teachers professional development opportunities regarding curriculum and support for students with disabilities. 33
  - provides adequate support to GE teachers who teach students with disabilities. 32

**To help students with disabilities who take the FCAT, my school:**

- provides students with appropriate testing accommodations. 76
- provides teachers with FCAT test preparation materials. 70
- aligns curriculum for students with the standards that are tested on the FCAT. 63
- gives students in ESE classes updated textbooks. 52

**% Consistently**

**To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school:**

- develops IEPs according to student needs. 80
- conducts ongoing assessments of individual students' performance. 71
- makes an effort to involve parents in their child's education. 67
- allows students to make up credits lost due to disability-related absences. 60
- ensures that classroom material is grade- and age-appropriate. 57
- encourages participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities. 54
- provides positive behavioral supports. 52
- ensures that classroom material is culturally appropriate. 49
- provides social skills training to students as needed. 38
- ensures that students are taught strategies to manage their behavior as needed. 38
- implements a dropout prevention program. 23

**The following items relate primarily to middle and high schools. One of the available choices was not applicable. Only responses from teachers of middle and high school students are included here.**

**% Consistently**

**To encourage students with disabilities to stay in school, my school:**

- implements an IEP transition plan for each student. 74
- provides students with information about options after graduation. 57
- provides students with job training. 35
- coordinates on-the-job training with outside agencies. 39
- teaches transition skills for future employment and independent living. 35

**To ensure that as many students with disabilities as possible graduate with a standard diploma, my school:**

- informs students through the IEP process of the different diploma options and their requirements. 68
- encourages students to aim for a standard diploma when appropriate. 64
- provides extra help to students who need to retake the FCAT. 62

**APPENDIX E:**  
**FORMS REVIEW**



**Marion County School District  
Focused Monitoring Report  
Forms Review**

This forms review was completed as a component of the focused monitoring visit conducted the week of September 8, 2003. The following district forms were compared to the requirements of applicable State Board of Education rules, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and applicable sections of Part 300, Code of Federal Regulations. The review includes required revisions and recommended revisions based on programmatic or procedural issues and concerns. The results of the review are detailed below and list the applicable sources used for the review.

<p><b>Parent Notification of Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting</b> <b>Form</b> <i>Invitation to Educational Planning Meeting ESE 10</i> <b>Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.345</b></p>
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This form contains the components for compliance.

**The following recommendation is made regarding this form:**

- The district is required to notify parents of those persons being invited to the IEP meeting. It is assumed that this form accomplishes this requirement by placing checks next to the titles of the people who will be invited. It is recommended that the comment, “The following people *may* be invited...” be changed to “The following people are invited...”

<p><b>Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting</b> <b>Form</b> <i>Individual Educational Plan ESE 09A, 09B/1, 09B/2, ESE 175B, ESE 36</i> <b>Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.347</b></p>
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**The following must be addressed:**

- In the section that documents why a student will not participate in a particular state- or district-wide assessment, the statement that explains why the assessment is not appropriate, must also include the required component of how the student will be assessed.

**The following recommendation is made in regard to this form:**

- It is recommended that at the next printing of this form, the district include in the transition section, the language of the IDEA reflecting that beginning at age 14 the student’s IEP must have a statement of the transition services needs related to the applicable components of the IEP focusing on the student’s courses of study, and that beginning at age 16, a statement of needed transition services including, when appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. While these components are included in the transition plan, the requirements for each age group are not specified.

**Notice and Consent for Initial Placement****Form *Informed Notice/Consent for Educational Placement ESE 12*****Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505****The following must be addressed:**

- The section of the form which states that the “Administrator and/or Designee approved the following:” must be changed to the “Administrator and/or Designee reviewed the following:” It is noted that the requirement for the Administrative review is also included on a separate form entitled “Staffing Committee Report” [ESE 13] in which the statement is written correctly, and includes the required notice of the date of the review. The district may want to eliminate the duplication on the Notice/Consent for Educational Placement.

**Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation****Form *Permission for Screening/Evaluation ESE 11*****Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505****The following recommendations are made in regard to this form:**

- It is recommended that at the next printing of this form, the phrase “...specific rights concerning this proposal which are described in the Summary of Procedural Safeguards...” be changed to “...protections under the procedural safeguards of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)...”
- It is recommended that at the next printing of this form, the phrase, “Should you want additional information on the proposed evaluation you may....” be changed to, “To obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of IDEA you may....”

**Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation****Form *Notice and Consent for Reevaluation ESE 45*****Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505****The following recommendations are made in regard to this form:**

- It is recommended that at the next printing of this form, the phrase “...specific rights concerning this proposal which are described in the Summary of Procedural Safeguards...” be changed to “...protections under the procedural safeguards of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)...”
- It is recommended that at the next printing of this form, the phrase, “Should you need additional information....” be changed to, “To obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of IDEA....”
- The IEP team may determine that it has enough information to complete the reevaluation process without needing to refer the student for additional testing. The district may want to consider adding that option to this form, and including an option for the parents to check that they are in agreement that no further testing is necessary. [A statement to this effect is incorrectly included in the Staffing Committee Report].

**Notice of Change in Placement Form****Form** *Informed Notice/Consent for Educational Placement ESE 12***Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505****The following must be addressed:**

- This form does not contain a description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report the district used as a basis for the change in placement. While there is a list of evaluation procedures, it is listed as procedures used by the staffing committee to determine eligibility.
- The form that was presented by the district as its form to notify parents of a change of placement is the same form used to obtain parental consent for placement. This form also contains staffing/eligibility information. One part of the form does address placement. While most of the notice requirements can be found on this form, it is not clear as to which sections would apply to the change of placement. The title and format of this form implies that the parent needs to sign consent. It is recommended that the district develop or revise another document for the notice of change in placement and/or change in FAPE. The district may want to consider revising its Notice of Refusal to Change a Specific Action form to include notice of change of placement and/or notice of refusal to change.

**Notice of Change in FAPE****Form** *Informed Notice/Consent for Educational Placement ESE 12***Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505****The following must be addressed:**

- While there are notice components on the form, this form does not contain the required notice components as related to a change of FAPE.
- As previously noted under Notice of Change of Placement, the Informed Notice/Consent for Educational Placement is unclear and confusing when attempting to apply it as notification of change of change of placement or change of FAPE. It is recommended that the district develop or revise another document for the notice of change in placement or change in FAPE. The district may want to consider revising its Notice of Refusal to Change a Specific Action form to include notice of change of placement and/or FAPE and notice of refusal to change.

**Informed Notice of Refusal****Form** *Informed Notice of Refusal to Take a Specific Action ESE 166***Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503****The following recommendations are made in regard to this form:**

- It is recommended that at the next printing of this form, the phrase "...specific rights concerning this proposal which are described in the Summary of Procedural Safeguards..." be changed to "...protections under the procedural safeguards of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)..."

- It is recommended that at the next printing of this form, the phrase, “Should you want additional information on the proposed evaluation you may....” be changed to, “To obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of IDEA you may....”

**Notice of Dismissal**

**Form** *Informed Notice/Consent for Educational Placement ESE 12*

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

**The following must be addressed:**

- This form indicates that a staffing committee determined that a student should be dismissed. An IEP team determines dismissal after a reevaluation. This form must be revised to indicate that, as a result of reevaluation the IEP team determined that a student should be dismissed.
- There is another form entitled “Staffing Committee Report” which also describes dismissal and reevaluation determination as a function of the staffing committee. The district must revise this form or develop another form which documents that reevaluation and dismissal are the functions of the IEP team and not the staffing committee.

**Notice of Ineligibility**

**Form** *Informed Notice/Consent for Educational Placement ESE 12*

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

**The following must be addressed:**

- The section of the form which states that the “Administrator and/or Designee approved the following:” must be changed to the “Administrator and/or Designee reviewed the following:” It is noted that the requirement for the Administrative review is also included on a separate form entitled “Staffing Committee Report” [ESE 13] in which the statement is written correctly, and includes the required notice of the date of the review. The district may want to eliminate the duplication on the Notice/Consent for Educational Placement, assuming both forms are used to document staffing results.

**Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination**

**Form** *Informed Notice/Consent for Educational Placement ESE 12, and Staffing Committee Report ESE 13*

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.534, 300.503**

The district submitted two forms documenting the staffing process. It is assumed that the forms are both completed at the staffing, and a copy of both given to the parent at that time. Each of these forms was reviewed separately.

Informed Notice/Consent for Educational Placement ESE 12

**The following must be addressed:**

- The section that reviews the recommendations of the staffing committee includes the statement that the “Administrator and/or Designee approved the following:” That statement

must be revised to state “Administrator and/or Designee reviewed the following:” The district must add the date of the Administrative review.

- Under staffing committee recommendations, this form lists dismissal as a function of the staffing committee. Dismissal is determined by the IEP team. This form must be revised to clearly show that dismissal is determined by the IEP team.
- Under staffing committee recommendations, this form lists “continues to be eligible for placement.” Continuing placement in an ESE program is determined after a reevaluation. The reevaluation process and recommendations are determined by an IEP team, not a staffing committee. The district must remove this option from the staffing committee options.

#### Staffing Committee Report

#### **The following must be addressed:**

- The statement included for reevaluation which informs the parent that no additional data is needed to determine if the student continues to be a student with a disability needs to be removed. It is suggested that this statement be added to the Notice/Consent for Reevaluation form.
- Under staffing committee recommendations, the options include reevaluation and dismissal procedures. The reevaluation and dismissal procedures are the function of the IEP team and need to be removed from the list of staffing committee recommendations.

#### **Confidentiality of Information**

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Part 99 Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503**

#### **The following must be addressed:**

- The district did not submit its notice of confidentiality of student records. Please note that this is not a form specific to ESE, but is required to be sent to all students and parents at least once during the school year. The district must submit a copy of this form for review.

It was noted that the district utilizes the procedural safeguards wording provided by the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services.



**APPENDIX F:**  
**GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**



## Glossary of Acronyms

Bureau	Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services
CST	Child Study Team
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
DOE	Department of Education
EH	Emotionally Handicapped
EMH	Educable Mentally Handicapped
EP	Educational Plan (for gifted students)
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
EXCEL	Excellence: A Commitment to Every Learner
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
GED	General Educational Development Tests
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act
IEP	Individual Educational Plan (for students with disabilities)
K-BIT	Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test
LEA	Local Educational Agency
LI	Language Impaired
OT	Occupational Therapy
PD&S	Program Development and Services
PreK (PK)	Pre-kindergarten
SED	Severely Emotionally Disturbed
SLD	Specific Learning Disability