

# Martin County School District

## Final Report: On-Site Monitoring Exceptional Student Education Programs

October 26–28, 2010



Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services  
Florida Department of Education

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January 4, 2011

Ms. Nancy Kline, Superintendent  
Martin County School District  
500 East Ocean Boulevard  
Stuart, FL 34994

Dear Superintendent Kline:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report: On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs* for the Martin County School District. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site visit to your district October 26–28, 2010, which included student record reviews, interviews with school and district staff, and classroom observations. The final report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

The Martin County School District was selected for an on-site visit due to matrix levels greater than 150 percent of the state rate for the 255 cost factor. In addition, the district's implementation of a problem-solving/response to intervention (PS/RtI) process was reviewed during the on-site visit. Ms. Maryellen Quinn-Lunny, Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Student Services Executive Director, and her staff were very helpful during the Bureau's preparation for the visit and during the on-site visit, as was Ms. Mollye Kiss, Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention (PS/RtI) Coordinator. In addition, the principals and other staff members at the schools visited welcomed and assisted Bureau staff members. The Bureau's on-site activities identified some discrepancies that required corrective action. The Bureau's on-site visit also identified strengths within the district's PS/RtI processes and targets for support.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services for exceptional education for students in Martin County. If there are any questions regarding this final report, please contact Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance, at (850) 245-0476 or via e-mail at [Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org](mailto:Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bambi J. Lockman".

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

Enclosure:

cc: Maryellen Quinn-Lunny  
Mollye Kiss

Kim C. Komisar  
Patricia Howell

Anne Bozik

**BAMBI J. LOCKMAN**  
Chief

*Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services*



**Martin County School District**

**Final Report: On–Site Monitoring  
Exceptional Student Education Programs**

**October 26–28, 2010**

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**Martin County School District**

**Final Report: On-Site Monitoring  
Matrix of Services  
Problem Solving/Response to Intervention (PS/RtI)  
October 26–28, 2010**

**Table of Contents**

Authority ..... 1  
Monitoring Process ..... 1  
    District Selection..... 1  
    On-Site Activities..... 2  
        *Monitoring Team* ..... 2  
        *Schools* ..... 2  
        *Data Collection*..... 3  
        *Review of Records*..... 3  
Results ..... 3  
    Strengths ..... 3  
    Concerns/Targets for Support ..... 4  
        *Matrix*..... 4  
        *PS/RtI* ..... 4  
        *Matrix*..... 5  
        *PS/RtI* ..... 5  
Corrective Action..... 5  
Technical Assistance..... 6  
Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations..... 7





# Martin County School District

## On-Site Monitoring Matrix of Services Problem Solving/Response to Intervention (PS/RtI) October 26–28, 2010

### Final Report

#### Authority

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (Bureau), in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation, is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all laws and rules (sections 1001.03(8) and 1008.32, Florida Statutes [F.S.]). One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (section 300.1(d) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]). In accordance with IDEA, the Bureau is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the Act and the educational requirements of the state are implemented (34 CFR §300.149(a)(1) and (2)).

In fulfilling this requirement, the Bureau monitors 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 ESE services; provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise helps school districts operate effectively and efficiently. The monitoring system is designed to emphasize improved educational outcomes for students while ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

#### Monitoring Process

##### District Selection

Districts were selected for on-site monitoring during the 2010–11 school year based on the following criteria:

- Matrix of services:
  - Districts that report students for weighted funding at >150 percent of the state rate for **at least one** of the following:
    - 254 (>7.38 percent)
    - 255 (>3.15 percent)
    - 254/255 combined (>10.53 percent)
  - Districts that report students for weighted funding at >125 percent of the state rate for **two or more** of the following cost factors:
    - 254 (>6.15 percent)
    - 255 (>2.63 percent)

- 254/255 combined (>8.78 percent)
- Pattern of poor performance over time in one or more targeted State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators, as evidenced by demonstrated progress below that of other targeted districts, and at least one of the following:
  - Targeted for a given SPP indicator or cluster of indicators for three consecutive years
  - Targeted for two or more SPP indicators or clusters of indicators for two consecutive years
- Problem solving/response to intervention (PS/RtI)
  - Eligible for on-site monitoring based on matrix of services or a pattern of poor performance over time on SPP indicators
  - Status as a pilot district for PS/RtI implementation; extent of implementation thus far

In a letter dated August 17, 2010, the Martin County School District superintendent was informed that the district was selected for a Level 3 on-site visit due to matrix levels greater than 150 percent of the state rate for the 255 cost factor. In addition, the district's implementation of a PS/RtI process was to be reviewed during the on-site visit.

## **On-Site Activities**

### ***Monitoring Team***

During October 26-28, 2010, Bureau staff members conducted an on-site visit related to matrix levels for students with disabilities. Bureau members also met with district staff to discuss the district's implementation of a PS/RtI process as it carries out its child find obligation to identify and evaluate students suspected of having a disability. The following Bureau staff members participated in the on-site visit:

- Anne Bozik, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance (Team Leader)
- Mary Sue Camp, Consultant, Exceptional Student Education
- Liz Conn, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance
- Heather Diamond, Program Specialist, Program Development and Services
- Vicki Eddy, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance
- Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance
- Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance
- Kim Komisar, Senior Educational Program Director
- Jackie Roumou, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution
- Jill Snelson, Program Specialist, Monitoring and Compliance

### ***Schools***

The following schools were selected for on-site visits based on the number of students with matrix of services cost factors of 254 and 255:

- Challenger Center
- Hope Center
- Sandy Pines

The following schools were visited related to PS/RtI:

- Bessey Creek Elementary School
- Crystal Lake Elementary School
- SeaWind Elementary School

### ***Data Collection***

On-site activities included the following:

- District-level interviews – 7 participants
- School-level interviews – 42 participants
- Record reviews (matrix of services) – 23 students
- Case studies (PS/RtI) – 12 students

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

The district was asked to provide the following documents for each of the 23 student records selected for the matrix review:

- Current individual educational plan (IEP)
- Functional behavioral assessment (FBA)/behavioral intervention plan (BIP), if any
- Therapy logs
- Any other supporting documentation as required by the *Matrix of Services Handbook*

This documentation was reviewed to verify that the services indicated on the matrix of services document were supported by the IEP and provided to the student as required.

The district was also asked to provide documentation related to the PS/RtI process for each of the 12 students selected for the PS/RtI process review. This information was used to examine implementation of PS/RtI across the district.

## **Results**

The following results reflect the data collected through the activities of the on-site visit as well as strengths, concerns and targets for support, findings of noncompliance, and required corrective action.

### **Strengths**

The following comments apply to all of the schools visited:

- Pleasant, orderly, and well organized schools
- High level of professionalism, commitment, and collaboration among staff
- Strong administrative leadership
- Access to programs such as Peace for Kids, Tykes and Teens, Suncoast Mental Health Center, and Helping People Succeed through district-wide mental health collaborative

In addition, the on-site team noted the following strengths regarding individual schools visited:

- Challenger Center:
  - Aggression Replacement Therapy to address challenging behaviors
  - Support for professional development for all staff
  - Low staff turnover
  - High level of student engagement within classrooms
  - Displays of student work throughout school
- Hope Center for Autism:
  - Staff knowledge regarding population of students served
  - Intensive individual and small group interventions and extensive daily data collection
  - Communication development infused throughout all activities

- Sandy Pines Center:
  - Collaboration between district and residential staff
  - Low staff turnover
  - Focus on stabilization of students upon program entry and transition back to zoned schools
  - Commitment to providing consistency to transient populations
- Bessey Creek School:
  - Use of Positive Behavior Support and Conscious Discipline programs
  - Efforts to increase parent understanding of and involvement in PS/RtI
  - Low staff turnover
  - Commitment to increasing use of data analysis and use of needs assessments to inform program goals
- Crystal Lake Elementary School:
  - Strong and enthusiastic PS/RtI team
  - “Hands-on” administration supports the PS/RtI process
  - Strong belief in the value of data analysis
  - Collaboration among staff and across disciplines to provide comprehensive services
- SeaWind Elementary School:
  - Detailed feedback provided to parents regarding interventions
  - Strong commitment to PS/RtI and staff self-awareness of strengths and targets for support
  - Administrative encouragement and participation in open and honest staff dialogue

## **Concerns/Targets for Support**

### ***Matrix***

There were no additional concerns related to matrix of services beyond the findings of noncompliance described in the following section.

### ***PS/RtI***

Regarding implementation of the PS/RtI process, the need for additional support or technical assistance to address the following was noted during discussions with school and district staff and through record reviews:

- Effective problem solving is a foundation for increasing student performance, and requires teams to devote a significant amount of time analyzing and addressing the needs of groups of students as well as individual students. Finding sufficient time for all team members to meet is a significant challenge, and redundancy in the current documentation process is a barrier.
- Time constraints have limited parent participation in problem solving. Strategies are needed to increase parent participation across multiple levels of the process (e.g., data analysis, intervention planning).
- Skill development on the part of problem solving teams has focused on data collection and reporting. Additional instruction in the problem-solving process itself, including using the data that are collected and reported to inform decisions regarding the nature and intensity of interventions. Specific topics on which to focus include the following:
  - Establishing criteria for determining whether a student’s response to intervention is sufficiently positive

- Developing and testing hypotheses
- Developing and implementing support plans to ensure that the staff responsible for implementation of interventions have the required skills and resources
- Assessing integrity and fidelity of interventions, revising them or providing additional support when needed
- Historically, teams required a predetermined set of assessments as part of any comprehensive evaluation, which was often not an efficient use of resources. A collaborative problem-solving approach should be used to review all existing data and clearly identify those areas for which additional data are needed to appropriately address the specific areas of concern.
- The Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program has proven to be an effective resource for increasing students' reading skills. Resources or interventions to support students who have reached their target levels on the LLI need to be identified to prevent an abrupt cessation of support.

## **Findings of Noncompliance**

### ***Matrix***

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

Upon final review of documentation, including observations, discrepancies that resulted in a change in the total cost factor were noted in 11 of the 23 records. Identifying information regarding those students was provided to the district prior to the dissemination of this report. The Martin County School District provided documentation that the corrections have been made in the Total Educational Resource Management System (TERMS), the local student database. The Bureau will verify these corrections when the information becomes available in the Automated Student Information System for October 2010 (survey 2).

### ***PS/RtI***

There were no findings of noncompliance regarding implementation of the PS/RtI process.

## **Corrective Action**

The matrix of services document must accurately reflect the current level of services being provided for the student as indicated on a student's IEP. In addition to the Bureau's verification of the district's correction of the matrix discrepancies identified in eleven student records, the

Martin County School District must complete the following **no later than March 4, 2011**:

- **Either** demonstrate 100 percent compliance on accurate matrix of services documents through review of a random sample of five student records with matrixes developed after December 2, 2010
- **Or** develop a corrective action plan (CAP) detailing the activities, resources, and timelines the district will employ to ensure that the compliance target of 100 percent will be met. The CAP **must** include a sampling procedure to demonstrate 100 percent compliance no later than October 31, 2011.

## Technical Assistance

Information to school districts regarding matrix completion can be found in the *Matrix of Services Handbook*. Technical assistance, support, and guidance to school districts regarding PS/RtI can be found on the Bureau's RtI website at <http://www.florida-rti.org/> and the specific learning disabilities (SLD) resource page at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/sld.asp>.

## Bureau Contacts

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

### ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance (PAQA)

(850) 245-0476

Kim Komisar, Ph.D., Administrator

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### PAQA – Monitoring and Compliance

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Patricia Howell, Program Director

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Anne Bozik, Program Specialist  
Okeechobee County ESE Compliance Liaison

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### ESE Program Development and Services

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### BEESS Resource and Information Center

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Judith White, Supervisor

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

**Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

BIP	Behavioral intervention plan
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
ESE	Exceptional student education
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
FEFP	Florida Education Finance Program
F.S.	Florida Statutes
FBA	Functional behavioral assessment
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
LLI	Leveled Literacy Intervention
PBS	Positive behavior support
PS/RtI	Problem solving/response to intervention
RtI	Response to intervention
SLD	Specific learning disabilities
SPP	State Performance Plan
TERMS	Total Educational Resource Management System



**Florida Department of Education**  
*Dr. Eric J. Smith, Commissioner*

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