

FINAL REPORT OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MONITORING
OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

NOVEMBER 22 - 24, 2004



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SERVICES
ESE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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telephone: (850) 245-0477

FAX: (850) 245-0987

Suncom: 205-0477

e-mail: cicbiscs@fldoe.org

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

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June 17, 2005

Dr. Patricia Cooper, Superintendent
Okeechobee County School District
700 SW Second Avenue
Okeechobee, Florida 34974-5117

Dear Dr. Cooper:

We are pleased to provide you with the Final Report of Continuous Improvement Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs in Okeechobee County that was conducted on November 22-24, 2004. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources, including information from the district presentation, interviews with school and district staff, student record reviews, and surveys of parents of exceptional students in the district. The report includes a system improvement plan outlining the findings of the monitoring team. The final report will be placed on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' website and may be viewed at www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm.

The Bureau has sent Ms. Cathleen Blair, ESE Director, an electronic copy of the system improvement plan for development. Within 30 days of the receipt of this electronic copy, the district is required to submit the completed system improvement plan for review by our office. The system improvement plan developed as a result of this visit may be incorporated into the district's existing continuous improvement plan, or may be developed independently. Bureau staff will work with Ms. Blair and her staff to develop 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. After the system improvement plan has been approved, it will also be placed on the Bureau's website.

BAMBI J. LOCKMAN

Chief

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Dr. Patricia Cooper

June 17, 2005

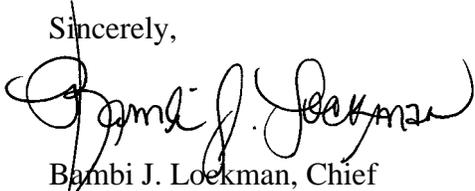
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An update of outcomes achieved and/or a summary of related activities, as identified in your district's plan, must be submitted by May 31 and November 30 of each school year for the next two years, unless otherwise noted on the plan.

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.

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

Sincerely,



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

Enclosure

cc: Gay Carlton, School Board Chair
Members of the School Board
Tom Conely, III, School Board Attorney
School Principals
Cathleen Blair, ESE Director
Jim Warford, Chancellor

**Okeechobee County Final Monitoring Report
 Continuous Improvement Monitoring
 November 22-24, 2004**

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**Okeechobee County School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring
November 22-24, 2004**

Executive Summary

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student 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)). 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 Sections 300.350(a)(2) and 300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the 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 Section 300.600(a)(1) and (2)).

On November 22-24, 2004, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, conducted an on-site review of the exceptional student education programs in Okeechobee County School District. Ms. Cathleen Blair, 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 key data indicators for students with disabilities and students identified as gifted, and all districts in the state have developed continuous improvement plans (CIPs) to address self-selected indicators for these populations. Okeechobee County was selected at random for a review of the strategies and interventions implemented thus far through its CIPs. The results of this review are reported here. In addition, this report includes information related to: the implementation of specific programs and related services for exceptional students, including students in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities; and, the results of records and forms reviews.

Summary of Findings

Continuous Improvement Plan: Students with Disabilities

The key data indicator for students with disabilities targeted for improvement by the Okeechobee County School District is graduation with a standard diploma. The district's primary emphasis has been to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in and be exposed to the general Sunshine State Standards, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will achieve a

passing score on the FCAT. Inclusion practices have been implemented in all schools and a Senior Boot Camp was implemented to provide intensive remediation and individualized test administration for students with disabilities.

Continuous Improvement Plan: Students Identified as Gifted

The key data indicator for gifted students targeted for improvement by the district is performance on the FCAT. Specifically, the district is focusing on the reading performance of gifted eighth grade students. The middle school program was modified to ensure that the students would not miss critical test-taking strategies instruction in their general education classes, although this decreased the amount of time they were pulled out for gifted services. The gifted students also receive extended computer time to work on activities that focus on reading.

Services to ESE Students in Department of Juvenile Justice Facilities

At the time of our visit, 26 ESE students were served through a consultative model and all students were pursuing a standard diploma. Both service delivery and diploma option were reported to be based on administrative convenience rather than on the needs of individual students. There were 12 students claimed at the 254 or 255 matrix level that were reported inaccurately. The district will be required to address these findings in its system improvement plan. Counseling was provided through psychologists on staff and ESE students typically received group counseling daily and individual counseling bi-monthly.

Provision of Counseling to Students with Disabilities

As part of the continuous improvement plan monitoring activities, the Bureau also conducted interviews related to the provision of counseling as a related service for students with disabilities. It was reported that counseling is available for all students through New Horizons, Suncoast, and Children and Family Services. Through record reviews and the on-site visit there was evidence that not all students identified as severely emotionally disturbed were receiving counseling. The district will be required to address this finding in its system improvement plan.

Provision of Speech/Language Services to Students with Communication Needs

There was evidence that the communication needs of students with disabilities who are not eligible for programs for students who are speech impaired or language impaired are being met. It was reported that the IEP team reviews the needs of the students; if communication needs are identified they are addressed through goals, objectives, and/or benchmarks in language arts, and that speech and language pathologists consult with the ESE teachers to address communication and language development in the classroom. There were no findings of noncompliance in this area.

Provision of Transition Services to Students with Disabilities

Agency participation in transition activities is available through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Administration on Developmental Disabilities. In addition, through a district agreement with the Association of Retarded Citizens (ARC), some of the ESE students attend leisure and job skill classes at the ARC center beginning at age 18. There were no findings of noncompliance in this area.

Review of Student Records

As a part of the continuous improvement plan monitoring procedures, 21 IEPs were reviewed for compliance. Findings of noncompliance for one of the IEPs resulted in fund adjustments. Two of the IEPs must be reconvened due to a lack of a majority of measurable annual goals. Ten EPs for gifted students were reviewed for compliance and three areas of systemic noncompliance were identified. There were 12 matrix of services that required correction at the Warrington/Blue Water DJJ and six matrix of services in schools other than the DJJ that required corrections. The district will be required to address staff training in and self-assessment of the systemic findings in its system improvement plan.

Special Category Records and Procedures

Nineteen records representing specific actions or procedures other than the development of IEPs or EPs were reviewed for compliance. There were no findings of noncompliance related to: initial eligibility and placement in a special program; dismissal from exceptional student education; students found ineligible for exceptional student education; and, evaluation of limited English proficient students for programs for students with disabilities. Records, representing temporary assignment of transferring students and transition from Part C early intervention services to Part B services under the IDEA, were found to be noncompliant. The district will be required to address these areas in its system improvement plan.

Forms Review

Forms representing ten procedures or action were found to require modification or revision. Specific information regarding these findings has been provided to the district via a letter dated October 15, 2004 (appendix E).

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 monitoring report to the district's continuous improvement 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 monitoring activities, including 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. These recommendations as well as specific discretionary projects, and a list of Department of Education contacts are available to provide technical assistance to the district in the development and implementation of the plan also are included as part of this report.

Okeechobee County School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring System Improvement Strategies

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.

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Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Continuous Improvement Plan: Students with Disabilities	The district selected increasing the number of students graduating with a standard diploma as the key indicator. Progress noted and verified.	X		The district will continue to address this issue through its continuous improvement plan.	The district will continue to provide semiannual reports of progress.
Continuous Improvement Plan: Students Identified as Gifted	The district selected improvement of 8 th grade reading scores as the key indicator. Progress noted and verified.	X		The district will continue to address this issue through its continuous improvement plan.	The district will continue to provide semiannual reports of progress.
Department of Juvenile Justice Facility	All students at Warrington and Blue Water DJJ are served through a consultative model and all students are pursuing a standard diploma; both service delivery and diploma option reported to be based on administrative convenience rather than on the needs of	X		A review of the service delivery options and diploma decision process will be conducted by staff from the DJJ and the district. A plan for ensuring that placement and diploma option decisions are based on the individual needs of the students will be developed and implemented. This will include provision of appropriate	Report of district self-assessment of a random sampling of 10 students served at Warrington and Blue Water DJJ reveals that the range of service delivery models available and the diploma options pursued

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Department of Juvenile Justice Facility (continued)	individual students. 12 matrix of services documents inaccurately reported			instruction in accordance with the students' diploma decisions. Evidence of corrections to the reported matrix levels of identified students have been submitted to the Bureau.	are appropriate to the individual needs of the students, for 100% of students reviewed. November 2005 May 2006
Provision of Counseling to Students with Disabilities	Some students identified as SED were not receiving counseling and/or counseling was not indicated on their IEP	X		IEPs of SED students will be reviewed to ensure that counseling as a related service is documented on the IEP and provided to the students.	Report of district self-assessment of a random sampling of 20 SED students reveals 100% compliance with requirements related to the provision of counseling as a related service. November 2005 May 2006
Provision of Communication Services to Students with Communication Needs	No findings of noncompliance in this area.	X			
Provision of Transition Services to Students with Disabilities	No findings of noncompliance in this area.	X			

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews	<p>A funding adjustment will be required for one IEP that lacks informed notice of change of placement.</p> <p>Two IEPs for students with disabilities were required to be reconvened.</p> <p>Six matrix of services were found to be inaccurately reported (other than DJJ).</p> <p>Systemic findings of noncompliance on IEPs were related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short term objectives or benchmarks • extent to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students in the general education class • prior written notice of a change of FAPE • correspondence between annual goals and short term objectives and needs identified on the present level of educational performance • course of study statement for students 14 years and older <p>Systemic findings of</p>	X		<p>IEP teams for identified students were reconvened to address findings of noncompliance. Documentation of the meetings was provided to the Bureau.</p> <p>The district will target the systemically noncompliant components of IEPs and EPs in its staff training, and conduct quarterly self-assessments of the results of the training through record reviews.</p> <p>Self-reviews of matrix of services documents from all schools, including DJJ facilities, will be conducted quarterly; corrections will be implemented as needed to ensure accurate data submission to the DOE.</p>	<p>Report of district self-assessment of a random sampling of 20 IEPs and 5 EPs reveals 100% compliance with requirements related to targeted components.</p> <p>November 2005 May 2006</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews (continued)	noncompliance on EPs were related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> description of the purpose of the meeting provided on the notice student outcomes present level of performance 				
Special Category Records and Procedures	Findings were in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part C to B temporary assignment 	X		In collaboration with Bureau staff the district will review and revise it's procedures for the temporary placement of transferring students. Training on the implementation of the revised procedures will be provided to targeted staff, with quarterly self-assessment conducted by district staff. In collaboration with the district's Part C provider, procedures for the transition of students from early intervention programs to PreK Part B services will be reviewed and revised to ensure that services for eligible students are provided no later than the students' third birthdays.	Report of district self-assessment of a random sampling of 10 temporarily placed transferring students and 5 children transitioning from Part C to Part B services reveals 100% compliance with all requirements. November 2005 May 2006
Forms Review	Forms used to document the following activities must be revised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 forms need corrections 	X		The district will revise the identified forms and submit them to the Bureau for review.	All forms have been corrected and submitted to the Bureau as of May 2005

Monitoring Process

Authority

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student 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)). 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 Sections 300.350(a)(2) and 300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the 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 Section 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.

Continuous Improvement Plan Monitoring

The purpose of the continuous improvement plan monitoring visits conducted by the Bureau is two-fold. The primary purpose is to afford an opportunity for school districts to provide validation of the activities they have undertaken through their continuous improvement plans for students with disabilities and students identified as gifted. In addition, these monitoring visits include a compliance review of selected student records and district policies and procedures related to the provision of services to exceptional education students. The latter includes reviews of: IEPs of students with disabilities; EPs of gifted students; documentation of a sampling of actions related to ESE (i.e., "special category records"); services provided to exceptional education students enrolled in charter schools and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities; the provision of counseling as a related service, including psychological counseling; the provision of speech and language services to students with disabilities with communication needs; transition from school to post-school living for students with disabilities; and, district forms.

Key Data Indicators

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services compiles an annual profile of key data indicators for each district in the state (LEA profile). 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. The 2004 LEA profiles for all Florida school districts are available on the web at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/datapage.htm>. Specific key data indicators reported in the LEA profile are used in the continuous improvement plan monitoring process. Okeechobee County School District's LEA profile is included in this report in appendix A.

The eight key data indicators for students with disabilities utilized through the continuous improvement plan monitoring process are as follows:

- participation in statewide assessments
- percentage of students exiting with a standard diploma
- dropout rate
- percentage of students participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers)
- performance on statewide assessments
- retention rate
- discipline rates
- disproportionate representation of student membership, which may include percentage of PK-12 students identified as educable mentally handicapped (EMH), racial/ethnic disparity of students identified as EMH, students identified as EMH served in separate class settings, or student membership for selected disabilities (specific learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, severely emotionally disturbed, and educable mentally handicapped)

The four key indicators for gifted students utilized through the continuous improvement plan monitoring process are as follows:

- performance on statewide assessments
- dropout rate
- disproportionality of student membership by racial/ethnic category, free/reduced lunch status, and limited English proficiency (LEP) status
- other, at district discretion

District Selection

Okeechobee County School District was one of four districts selected at random for a continuous improvement plan monitoring visit in 2004. It was selected from the pool of districts that had not participated in a monitoring visit by the Bureau for the previous two years. Okeechobee County School District's self-selected indicator for students with disabilities is graduation with a standard diploma; the indicator for students identified as gifted is performance on the FCAT in reading for the 8th grade cohort. The district's continuous improvement plans are included as appendix B.

Sources of Information

On-Site Monitoring Activities

The on-site continuous improvement plan monitoring visit was conducted by two Bureau staff members on November 22-24, 2004. A listing of all monitoring team members is provided as appendix C. The primary on-site activity conducted as part of the visit was a demonstration by the district of the strategies implemented thus far through its continuous improvement plans (CIPs) for students with disabilities and gifted students. The components of the demonstration were determined by the district based on the areas targeted for improvement, and the types of activities conducted by the district.

Ms. Cathleen Blair, Director, Exceptional Student Education, served as the coordinator and point of contact for the district during the monitoring visit. In addition, district and school staff members Pat Cooper, Debby Johnson, Sally Wibbels, Laura Murray, Hazel Parnis, Ann Bell, Sharon Suits, Al Jaquith, Mary Hurley, Zella Kirk, Tony Wiersma, Carey Johnson, Debby Lundy, and Russ Brown attended the presentation. Cathleen Blair is to be commended for a presentation that was thorough, well prepared, and well executed; the written documentation verified the information that was presented.

In addition to the district presentation, visits were made to selected school sites for the purpose of interviewing staff. The following schools were visited:

- South Elementary School, Debby Lundy, Principal
- Osceola Middle School, Russ Brown, Principal
- Okeechobee High School, Gary Kirsch, Principal
- New Endeavor High School, George Jackson, Principal
- Vision Quest, (Warrington and Blue Water DJJ facilities), Carey Johnson, Principal

Interviews

Interviews with selected district- and school-level personnel were conducted using interview protocols developed specifically to address the continuous improvement monitoring plan being implemented by the district. In addition, separate protocols were used to address the provision of services to students in juvenile justice facilities; counseling as a related service, including psychological counseling; transition services; and, speech and language services. In the Okeechobee County School District, interviews were conducted with 24 people, including 2 district-level administrators or staff, 2 school-level administrators or staff, 10 ESE teachers, and 10 general education teachers.

Classroom Visits

Classroom visits were conducted in a total of 11 ESE and general education classrooms during the monitoring visit in Okeechobee 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. The results of each of the surveys are included as appendix D. In addition, Bureau staff conducts reviews of selected student records (IEPs, matrices, and EPs),

as well as special categories procedures and district forms. Information from the surveys and the records and forms reviews are incorporated into this report.

Parent Surveys

Surveys were mailed to parents of students with disabilities and parents of students identified as gifted. 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 conjunction with the 2004 Okeechobee County monitoring activities, the parent survey was sent to parents of 1,634 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 175 parents (PK, n=12; K-5, n=85; 6-8, n=36; 9-12, n=42) representing 11% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 104 families were returned as undeliverable, representing <6% of the sample for students with disabilities.

The parent survey was sent to parents of the 161 students identified as gifted for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 64 parents (KG-5, n=24; 6-8, n = 23; 9-12, n=17) representing 40% of the sample, returned the survey. Three surveys were returned as undeliverable, representing 2% of the sample.

Review of Student Records

Prior to the on-site monitoring visit, Bureau staff conducted a compliance review of records selected from a randomized list of ESE students in the district. In Okeechobee County 21 IEPs for students with disabilities and 10 EPs for gifted students were reviewed.

Review of Special Category Records and Procedures

In addition to the IEP and EP reviews noted, Bureau staff also reviewed 19 special category records and procedures for compliance. This review included the following targeted special categories

- four initial eligibility determinations and placements in special programs
- three dismissals from exceptional student education
- three temporary assignments to exceptional student education
- three students found ineligible for exceptional student education
- three limited English proficiency: students found eligible for services as a student with a disability
- three prekindergarten students who have transitioned from Part C to Part B

The matrix of services document for at least one student reported at the 254 or 255 level through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) may be reviewed on-site at each school visited, if available. The IEP must support the services identified on the matrix, and the services must be in evidence in the classroom. During this visit 12 matrix of services were reviewed at the DJJ sites visited and six matrix of services documents from traditional school sites were reviewed.

Review of District Forms

Bureau staff reviewed selected district forms and notices to determine if the required components were included. The results of the reviews of student records and district forms are described in this report. As of May 2005 all required forms have been corrected. A detailed explanation of the findings is included as appendix E.

Reporting Process

Interim Reports

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. 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. Appendices with data specific to the district accompany each report. The director will have the opportunity to discuss and clarify with Bureau staff items within 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. Within 30 days of the district's receipt of the final report, a 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 to the district's continuous improvement plan. The plan must provide for findings to be addressed in a timely manner, with compliance and procedural issues regarding IEPs and direct services to individual students to be resolved by a date designated by the Bureau, not to exceed 90 days. Other issues may be required to be resolved over a period of time not to exceed one year. All system improvement plans will be expected to extend for a period of at least two years, in order to provide an assurance of the ongoing effectiveness of the district's strategies for improvement. 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 final report, including the plan, is posted on the Bureau's website at www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm. Corrective actions are monitored through the submission of semiannual status reports of progress to be submitted to the Bureau on May 31st and November 30th of each year for the duration of the system improvement plan.

Reporting of Information

The data generated through the district presentation, surveys, individual interviews, and classroom visits are summarized in this report. Information regarding the district's progress in its continuous improvement plans for students with disabilities and gifted students is provided, as well as information related to services provided to ESE students in DJJ facilities and the results of records and forms reviews. In accordance with the Department's agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), additional areas addressed during all monitoring visits include the following:

- the provision of counseling as a related service
- the communication needs of students with disabilities not eligible for programs for students who are speech or language impaired
- school to post-school transition

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. To the extent appropriate, improvement strategies will be incorporated into the district's continuous improvement plans.

Results

Students with Disabilities

The district's goal in its continuous improvement plan for students with disabilities is to increase the number of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma (2001-02 baseline: 48%). Strategies to accomplish this focused on providing students with disabilities increased access to instruction to the Sunshine State Standards through improved inclusion practices at all schools and on increasing the number of secondary students earning passing scores on the FCAT.

Specific strategies or interventions implemented to achieve the goal include:

- support for and expansion of initiatives that promote access to the general curriculum through the use of assistive technology
- provision of information to parents, students, and staff regarding course curriculum and assessment options
- support for efforts at the elementary and middle levels to integrate students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) and emotional handicaps (EH) into general education classrooms
- discussion of diploma options at IEP meetings in all grades, with an emphasis on appropriate placement and assessment options
- increase in the number of co-taught classes, especially in reading and math

- training in the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) and in learning styles and the use of instructional accommodations
- tutoring provided before and after school at all schools

The district now has three strategic instruction model (SIMs) trainers who have trained over 100 ESE and general education teachers over the last three years. Training has focused on use of the following strategies: Sentence Writing, Paragraph Writing, and Organizing Together. Tutoring also has been used to enhance success in the general curriculum and improve FCAT scores. Fourteen teachers provided before or after-school tutoring for 113 students. Of the 113 students, 75% showed improvement in their FCAT scores.

Senior Boot Camp was initiated in the spring of 2002 specifically for seniors who needed to pass the FCAT to graduate. Seniors who had not passed either portion of the FCAT were provided intensive remediation in reading and/or math. Teachers reviewed all previous FCAT scores and determined individual areas of need. Testing was administered at the community college. Each senior had his or her own individual proctor; students were encouraged to read their test aloud to the individual proctor and proctors served as scribe for individual students, if needed. "Special request" snacks were provided and frequent breaks were encouraged. Of the 25 seniors who went through the senior boot camp in the past two years, 19 passed the FCAT and six received waivers. During the summer of 2004 17 seniors either needed to pass the reading or math portion of the test. Twelve of those students graduated with a standard diploma without applying for a waiver.

A review of surveys completed by parents of students with disabilities indicated that 75% of respondents were satisfied with their child's ESE services. While 48% of the parents indicated that their child's participation in the FCAT testing was discussed at the IEP meeting, 64% reported discussing accommodations, such as special testing accommodations. While only 38% of parents with students in grade eight and above indicated that diploma options had been explained to them, all eight IEPs that were reviewed for students who were 14 years of age and/or in grade 8 and above included the required components for diploma option.

As part of the monitoring activities, South Elementary School, Osceola Middle School, and Okeechobee High School were selected for on-site visits. South Elementary School was chosen based on its inclusive practices. At the elementary school level the focus was to move students into the general education classroom in order to expose them to the general sunshine state standards to the greatest extent possible. The principal reported that all general education teachers in grades three through five have been trained in Science Research Associates (SRA) corrective reading.

Osceola Middle School also is focusing on inclusion; there are two inclusion teachers in the sixth grade, one in the seventh grade, and one in the eighth grade. The remediation programs in place include Literacy First, SRA corrective reading, and the Wilson Reading Program. Staff at the middle school reported that they would like the remaining content area courses (math, social studies, and science) to be targeted for intensive resources as reading has been.

At Okeechobee High School students with disabilities are supported by inclusion teachers and by paraprofessionals. Gear Up is an after school tutorial program available for all students; both general education and ESE students participate. Students can receive tutorial help three days per week in any course or specific skill area they are having difficulty with.

In summary, the key indicator Okeechobee County School District selected for students with disabilities was graduation with a standard diploma. The main emphasis was to increase students with disabilities participation in and exposure to the general Sunshine State Standards, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will achieve a passing score on the FCAT. Inclusion practices have been implemented in all schools and a Senior Boot Camp was implemented to provide intensive remediation and individualized test administration for students with disabilities.

Students Identified as Gifted

The district's goal in its continuous improvement plan for gifted students is to increase the performance on FCAT for gifted students in grades 3, 8 and 10. Relatively more progress has been made in grades 3 and 10 in reading and math, and grade 8 in math; current activities focus most intensively on reading performance for 8th grade gifted students.

Specific strategies or interventions implemented to achieve the goal included a change in the scheduling of gifted services to middle school students. It was noted by district personnel that the existing service delivery model for middle school gifted students caused them to miss one day per week in their general education classes during a time when other students were receiving instruction in test-taking strategies. In order to address this issue, gifted services for middle school students were reduced to a half day pull-out program and computer activities were extended to include time to work on reading skills. This has allowed students served in the gifted program to participate in the test-taking strategies classes. The middle school students attend for one half day each week and work on research projects, either in small groups or independently.

Elementary school students are served in a one day per week pull-out program. The elementary students work as a class in themed units in the morning and then they participate in independently contracted areas in the afternoon.

The service delivery model described for high school students consists of monthly consultation with the guidance counselor, focusing on assistance with the college admissions process. It was reported that gifted students at the high school level are encouraged to enroll in advanced placement (AP) and dual enrollment classes at the community college.

Of the parents who responded to the survey for gifted students, 64% reported satisfaction with the level of challenging material in their child's general education classes and 68% reported satisfactions with the gifted services their child receives. It was noted that 48% of the parents responding indicated that they were told how they could request changes to their children's Education Plans (EPs).

In summary, the key data indicator for gifted students targeted by the district is performance on the FCAT. Specifically, the district is focusing on the reading performance of gifted eighth grade students. The middle school program was modified to ensure that the students would not miss

critical test-taking strategies instruction in their general education classes, although this decreased the amount of time they were pulled out for gifted services. The gifted students also receive extended computer time to work on activities that focus on reading.

Services to ESE Students in Department of Juvenile Justice Facilities

The monitoring team visited the Warrington and Blue Water DJJ facilities as part of the continuous monitoring process. During this visit five interviews were conducted and seven classrooms were visited. Both facilities are run by Vision Quest, a private corporation. Warrington is a low risk level 4 facility, while Blue Water is a level 6, moderate risk facility; both serve female students up to 18 years of age. The average length of stay at Warrington is 4-6 months, whereas the average stay at Blue Water is 6-9 months. Each facility has a capacity of 70 students. At the time of the monitoring visit there were seven students with disabilities at Warrington and 17 students with disabilities and two gifted students at Blue Water. All students are provided instruction in the Sunshine State Standards and participate in FCAT preparation activities throughout the year. There are some vocational programming opportunities and students participate in horse care and training. These two facilities, which are on adjacent properties, are unique in that they teach troubled girls to break “green” horses and in the process teach these girls trust, patience, and responsibility.

While students are assigned to a particular facility (Warrington or Blue Water) based on the varying security levels, staff are shared across the programs. Warrington and Blue Water share six general education teachers and one ESE consulting teacher. All students are served in general education classes for the entire school day, with consultation provided to the general education teachers by the ESE teacher. One-on-one tutoring by the ESE teacher also is provided, but this is not documented on the IEPs, and is provided on an informal “as needed” basis. There was evidence in record reviews and interviews that the limited service delivery model was not based on student needs but rather on the administrative and instructional organization of the program. Staff reported that the facility is considering expanding its service delivery options to be able to provide direct ESE services to students who need them. Similarly, staff reported that, while some of the students were pursuing a special diploma at the time they entered one of the programs, the current practice includes revising the IEP to change the diploma option to a standard diploma. The district will be required to address these in its system improvement plan.

Twelve matrix of services were reviewed for students at the Warrington and Blue Water DJJ facilities operated by Vision Quest. Of the twelve matrices reviewed all twelve were reported inaccurately. There were also concerns related to the lack of participation of required participants at these IEP meetings. The district will be required to provide training and oversight in the areas of matrix training and IEP meeting requirements.

Counseling is provided for all students at the facility through psychologists paid through Medicaid. There are group counseling sessions daily and individual counseling sessions are provided bi-monthly.

In summary, at the time of our visit, 26 ESE students were served through a consultative model and all students were pursuing a standard diploma. Both service delivery and diploma option were reported to be based on administrative convenience rather than on the needs of individual

students. There were 12 students claimed at the 254 or 255 matrix level who were reported inaccurately. The district will be required to address these findings in its system improvement plan. Counseling was provided through psychologists on staff and ESE students typically received group counseling daily and individual counseling bi-monthly.

Provision of Counseling to Students with Disabilities

As part of the continuous improvement plan monitoring activities, the Bureau also conducted interviews related to the provision of counseling as a related service for students with disabilities. It was reported that counseling is available for all students through New Horizons, Suncoast, and Children and Family Services. Through record reviews and the on-site visit there was evidence that not all students identified as severely emotionally disturbed were receiving counseling. The district will be required to address this finding in its system improvement plan.

Provision of Speech/Language Services to Students with Communication Needs

Through record reviews and interviews there was evidence that the communication needs of students with disabilities who are not eligible for programs for students who are speech impaired or language impaired are being met. It was reported that the IEP team reviews the needs of the students; if communication needs are identified they are addressed through goals, objectives, and/or benchmarks in language arts. It was reported that speech and language pathologists consult with the ESE teachers to address communication and language development in the classroom.

Provision of Transition Services to Students with Disabilities

School and district staff reported that outside agencies are invited to IEP meetings starting in the year the student turns 16. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) sends a counselor to the IEP meeting in the fall of the student's senior year. Administration on Developmental Disabilities will begin working with students at 14 or 15. Also beginning at age 15, the district's transition specialist is invited to talk to classes about career opportunities and community services. Through a district agreement to with the Association of Retarded Citizens (ARC), some of the ESE students attend leisure and job skill classes at the ARC center beginning at age 18. There was evidence of agency being invited and agency participation in the records reviewed.

Review of Student Records

Twenty-one IEPs and ten EPs, randomly selected from the population of exceptional students, were reviewed prior to the on-site visit. In order to be considered a systemic finding, a specific component of the IEP or EP must be found to be noncompliant in 25% or more of the records reviewed. For Okeechobee County that represents at least six IEPs and at least two EPs. Student specific corrective actions (e.g., funding adjustments; reconvening of the IEP teams) are required for some types of noncompliance, while others may require planning and implementation of targeted staff training and/or oversight of identified procedures. For the 21 IEPs reviewed, the following five areas of noncompliance were systemic in nature:

- lack of adequate short term objectives or benchmarks (12)
- inadequate explanations of the extent to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students in the general education class (8)

- lack of documentation that, if the IEP reflects a significant change in the provision of FAPE from the prior IEP, the parent received prior written notice of the change of FAPE (7)
- lack of correspondence between annual goals and short term objectives and needs identified on the present level of educational performance(6)
- lack of course of study statement for students 14 years and older (6)

In addition, the following individual or non-systemic findings were evident in at least three records:

- lack of adequate present level of performance (5)
- lack of transition identified as a purpose for the meeting for students 14 years and older (4)
- lack of measurable annual goals (4)
- lack of adequate frequency of services statement (3)
- lack of description of report of progress towards goals (3)

For two of the IEPs reviewed more than 50% of the annual goals were not measurable, and IEP teams must be reconvened to address this finding. The district was notified of the specific students requiring reconvened IEP meetings in a letter dated December 2, 2004. In addition, one record was found to be out of compliance for a lack of prior written notice of change of placement. The district was notified of this student identified for a fund adjustment in the previously mentioned letter.

Of the ten EPs reviewed, the following three areas of noncompliance were systemic in nature:

- lack of description of the purpose of the meeting provided on the notice (8)
- lack of student outcomes (7)
- lack of present level of performance or strengths and weaknesses (7)

There were no additional individual or non-systemic areas of noncompliance.

The Bureau conducted reviews of six matrix of services documents for students reported at the 254 or 255 funding level enrolled in traditional school programs (non-DJJ). Of those reviews, all six were found to be inaccurately reported. Any services claimed on the matrix must be documented on the IEP. The services identified on the matrices for these students were not in evidence on the IEPs.

In summary, as a part of the continuous improvement plan monitoring procedures, 21 IEPs were reviewed for compliance. Findings of noncompliance for one of the IEPs resulted in fund adjustments. Two of the IEPs must be reconvened due to a lack of a majority of measurable annual goals. Ten EPs for gifted students were reviewed for compliance and three areas of systemic noncompliance were identified. Six matrix of services records from traditional school programs (non-DJJ) were reviewed and all six were reported inaccurately. Additional information, including identification of the specific student records in question, has been provided to the district under separate cover. The district will be required to address staff training in and self-assessment of the systemic findings in its system improvement plan.

Review of Special Category Records and Procedures

In addition to the IEP and EP reviews described above, Bureau staff reviewed a total of 19 special category records and procedures, representing the following actions:

- four staffings for initial eligibility and placement in a special program
- three dismissals from exceptional student education
- three temporary assignments to exceptional student education
- three students found ineligible for exceptional student education
- three limited English proficiency: students found eligible for services as a student with a disability
- three prekindergarten students who have transitioned from Part C to Part B

The district also was asked to provide records representing the following procedures or actions, but reported that it had no current records in these areas:

- limited English proficiency: student found ineligible for gifted services
- student who has been assigned a surrogate parent
- parentally placed private school student

There were no findings of noncompliance related to: initial eligibility and placement in a special program; dismissal from exceptional student education; students found ineligible for exceptional student education; and, evaluation of limited English proficient students for programs for students with disabilities.

Of the three records of students temporarily assigned to exceptional student education, all were found to be noncompliant due to lack of individualization (i.e., with few exceptions, same goals for all students, regardless of level). It was reported that 203 temporary IEPs for transferring students were developed during the 2003-04 school year. Staff were asked to describe the existing procedures for temporary assignment of transferring students. All temporary assignment IEPs are written at the district office, with a one-year duration date. One of three staffing specialists participates as the LEA. Record reviews and teachers at the schools visited indicated that both ESE and general education teachers, who did not attend the meetings, sign the IEP once it is sent to the school building. Informed consent to reevaluate the student is obtained from the parent, and the district develops a permanent IEP within three to six months of the student's enrollment in Okeechobee County. These procedures do not align with Rule 6A-6.0334, FAC, Temporary Assignment of Transferring Exceptional Students, and Rule 6A-6.03028, FAC, Development of Individual Educational Plans for Students with Disabilities. The district will be required to address these findings in its system improvement plan to ensure that all IEPs, including temporary IEPs for transferring students, are developed by IEP teams that include required participants and that address the unique needs of the individual student. The plan must include quarterly self-reviews of these documents.

Three records for children transitioning from Part C early intervention services to B services as a student with a disability. For each of the students, services were not initiated by the students' third birthday. For two the students the planning meeting took place less than 90 days prior to the student's third birthday. The district will be required to address this finding in its system improvement plan.

In summary, six of the 19 special categories records reviewed, representing temporary assignment of transferring students and transition from Part C early intervention services to Part B services under the IDEA, were found to be noncompliant. The district will be required to address these areas in its system improvement plan.

District Forms Review

Forms representing the fourteen areas identified below were submitted to the Bureau for review to determine compliance with federal and state laws. Findings were noted on 10 of the forms, and changes are required on those forms. A detailed explanation of the specific findings is included as appendix E.

- Parent Notification of IEP Meeting*
- IEP form*
- EP form, including Parent Notification of EP Meeting*
- Notice and Consent for Initial Placement*
- Notification of Change of Placement*
- Notification of Change of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)*
- Informed Notice of Ineligibility*
- Informed Notice of Dismissal*
- Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation
- Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation
- Informed Notice of Refusal*
- Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination*
- Annual Notice of Confidentiality
- Summary of Procedural Safeguards

*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. To the extent appropriate, the system improvement activities resulting from this monitoring visit should be incorporated into the district's existing continuous improvement plans. 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 monitoring activities, including debriefings with the monitoring team and district staff, suggestions and/or recommendations related to interventions or strategies are often 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.

Okeechobee County School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring System Improvement Strategies

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.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Continuous Improvement Plan: Students with Disabilities	The district selected increasing the number of students graduating with a standard diploma as the key indicator. Progress noted and verified.	X		The district will continue to address this issue through its continuous improvement plan.	The district will continue to provide semiannual reports of progress.
Continuous Improvement Plan: Students Identified as Gifted	The district selected improvement of 8 th grade reading scores as the key indicator. Progress noted and verified.	X		The district will continue to address this issue through its continuous improvement plan.	The district will continue to provide semiannual reports of progress.
Department of Juvenile Justice Facility	All students at Warrington and Blue Water DJJ are served through a consultative model and all students are pursuing a standard diploma; both service delivery and diploma option reported to be based on administrative convenience rather than on the needs of	X		A review of the service delivery options and diploma decision process will be conducted by staff from the DJJ and the district. A plan for ensuring that placement and diploma option decisions are based on the individual needs of the students will be developed and implemented. This will include provision of appropriate	Report of district self-assessment of a random sampling of 10 students served at Warrington and Blue Water DJJ reveals that the range of service delivery models available and the diploma options pursued

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Department of Juvenile Justice Facility (continued)	individual students. 12 matrix of services documents inaccurately reported			instruction in accordance with the students' diploma decisions. Evidence of corrections to the reported matrix levels of identified students have been submitted to the Bureau.	are appropriate to the individual needs of the students, for 100% of students reviewed. December 2005 May 2006
Provision of Counseling to Students with Disabilities	Some students identified as SED were not receiving counseling and/or counseling was not indicated on their IEP	X		IEPs of SED students will be reviewed to ensure that counseling as a related service is documented on the IEP and provided to the students.	Report of district self-assessment of a random sampling of 20 SED students reveals 100% compliance with requirements related to the provision of counseling as a related service. December 2005 May 2006
Provision of Communication Services to Students with Communication Needs	No findings of noncompliance in this area.	X			
Provision of Transition Services to Students with Disabilities	No findings of noncompliance in this area.	X			

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews	<p>Fund adjustments will be required for one IEP that lacks informed notice of change of placement.</p> <p>Two IEPs for students with disabilities were required to be reconvened.</p> <p>Six matrix of services were found to be inaccurately reported (other than DJJ).</p> <p>Systemic findings of noncompliance on IEPs were related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short term objectives or benchmarks • extent to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students in the general education class • prior written notice of a change of FAPE • correspondence between annual goals and short term objectives and needs identified on the present level of educational performance • course of study statement for students 14 years and older <p>Systemic findings of</p>	X		<p>IEP teams for identified students were reconvened to address findings of noncompliance. Documentation of the meetings was provided to the Bureau.</p> <p>The district will target the systemically noncompliant components of IEPs and EPs in its staff training, and conduct quarterly self-assessments of the results of the training through record reviews.</p> <p>Self-reviews of matrix of services documents from all schools, including DJJ facilities, will be conducted quarterly; corrections will be implemented as needed to ensure accurate data submission to the DOE.</p>	<p>Report of district self-assessment of a random sampling of 20 IEPs and 5 EPs reveals 100% compliance with requirements related to targeted components.</p> <p>December 2005 May 2006</p>

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change (Including target date)
Record Reviews (continued)	noncompliance on EPs were related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> description of the purpose of the meeting provided on the notice student outcomes present level of performance 				
Special Category Records and Procedures	Findings were in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part C to B temporary assignment 	X		In collaboration with Bureau staff the district will review and revise it's procedures for the temporary placement of transferring students. Training on the implementation of the revised procedures will be provided to targeted staff, with quarterly self-assessment conducted by district staff. In collaboration with the district's Part C provider, procedures for the transition of students from early intervention programs to PreK Part B services will be reviewed and revised to ensure that services for eligible students are provided no later than the students' third birthdays.	Report of district self-assessment of a random sampling of 10 temporarily placed transferring students and 5 children transitioning from Part C to Part B services reveals 100% compliance with all requirements. December 2005 May 2006
Forms Review	Forms used to document the following activities must be revised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 forms need corrections 	X		The district will revise the identified forms and submit them to the Bureau for review.	All forms have been corrected and submitted to the Bureau as of May 2005

Recommendations and Technical Assistance

As a result of the continuous monitoring activities conducted in Okeechobee County on November 22-24, 2004, the Bureau has identified specific findings. Requirements for specific corrective actions or improvement strategies have been included in the SIP. In addition, 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, and is 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 is also provided. These resources may be of assistance in the development and/or implementation of the system improvement plan.

Recommendations

- Review district criteria for exemption from FCAT and compare to state criteria in State Board Rule 6A-1.0943(1)(a)(1-2) in order to align district criteria with state rule.
- Review services at the Juvenile Justice Facility to determine if direct services by an ESE teacher would be more appropriate for students on a special diploma.

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.

Student Support Services Project

(850) 922-3727

Website: <http://sss.usf.edu>

The project is responsible for providing technical assistance, training and resources to Florida school districts and state agencies in matters related to student support (school psychology, social work, nursing, counseling, and school-to-work).

Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)/ Galaxy Associate Center

(772) 429-4600 or (772) 429-4585 ; Suncom 231-5385

Website: <http://www.fdlrsgalaxy.org/>

FDLRS provides diagnostic and instructional support services to district exceptional student education programs and families of students with exceptionalities statewide. IEP development and matrix training are just two of the professional development opportunities provided by the project.

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student 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.

ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance—Monitoring (850) 245-0476

Eileen Amy, Administrator
Eileen.Amy@fldoe.org

Kim Komisar, Program Director
Kim.Komisar@fldoe.org

April Katine, Program Specialist
April.Katine@fldoe.org

Barbara McAnelly, Program Specialist
Barbara.Mcanelly@fldoe.org

Angela Nathaniel, Program Specialist
Angela.Nathaniel@fldoe.org

Clearinghouse Information Center
cicbiscs@FLDOE.org
(850) 245-0477

ESE Program Development and Services (850) 245-0478

Evy Friend, Administrator
Evy.Friend@fldoe.org

Speech/Language Impaired
Lezlie Cline, Program Director
Lezlie.Cline@fldoe.org

Specific Learning Disabled/ IEPs
Heather Diamond, Program Specialist
Heather.Diamond@fldoe.org

**Behavior/Discipline
EH/SED**
Lee Clark, Program Specialist
Lee.Clark@fldoe.org

Mentally Handicapped/Autism
Sheryl Brainard, Program Specialist
Sheryl.Brainard@fldoe.org

Assistive Technology
Karen Morris, Program Specialist
Karen.Morris@fldoe.org

Transition Services
Janet Adams, Program Specialist
Janet.Adams@fldoe.org

APPENDIX A:

LEA Profile



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

2004 LEA PROFILE

JIM HORNE, COMMISSIONER

DISTRICT:	OKEECHOBEE	PK-12 POPULATION:	7,275
ENROLLMENT GROUP:	7,000 TO 20,000	PERCENT DISABLED:	21%
		PERCENT GIFTED:	2%

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, their enrollment group (districts of comparable size), and the state. Where appropriate and available, comparative data for general education students are included.

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

- Graduation rates for students with disabilities receiving standard diplomas through meeting all graduation requirements, GED Exit Option, and FCAT waivers
- Dropout rates
- Post-school outcome data
- Third grade promotion and retention, including good cause promotions

Note: FCAT participation and performance data formerly included in the LEA profile will be published separately in Fall 2004.

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

- Regular class, resource room, and separate class placement, ages 6-21
- Early childhood setting or home, part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education setting and early childhood special education setting, ages 3-5
- 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 percentage of all disabilities and as a percentage of total PK-12 population

LEA PROFILE 2004

Three of the indicators included in the profile, 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 through the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP).

DISTRICTS IN OKEECHOBEE'S ENROLLMENT GROUP:

Charlotte, Citrus, Columbia, Flagler, Gadsden, Hendry, Hernando, Highlands, Indian River, Jackson, Martin, Monroe, Nassau, Okeechobee, Putnam



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 progression, school completion, and post-school outcomes.

STANDARD DIPLOMA STUDENTS MEETING ALL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:

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-W10, W27, WGD, WFW, WFT) as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Okeechobee	48%	32%	64%
Enrollment Group	42%	52%	45%
State	51%	48%	45%

STANDARD DIPLOMA THROUGH GED EXIT OPTION:

The number of students with disabilities in a GED Exit Option Model who passed the GED Tests and the FCAT or HSCT and were awarded a standard high school diploma (withdrawal code W10) divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education (withdrawal codes W06-W10, W27, WGD, WFW, WFT) as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Okeechobee	0%	4%	6%
Enrollment Group	2%	3%	2%
State	1%	1%	1%

STANDARD DIPLOMA THROUGH FCAT WAIVER:

The number of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma through the FCAT waiver (withdrawal code WFW) divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education (withdrawal codes W06-W10, W27, WGD, WFW, WFT) as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for **2002-03**, the first year waivers were available.

	2002-03
Okeechobee	0%
Enrollment Group	6%
State	9%

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, gifted students, all PK-12 students, students identified as EH/SED, and students identified as SLD for the years **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	Students with Disabilities			Gifted Students			All Students		
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Okeechobee	6%	4%	7%	0%	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%
Enrollment Group	5%	5%	5%	<1%	<1%	<1%	4%	3%	3%
State	5%	5%	4%	<1%	<1%	<1%	4%	3%	3%

	EH/SED			SLD		
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Okeechobee	6%	4%	3%	8%	4%	9%
Enrollment Group	7%	7%	7%	5%	5%	5%
State	9%	7%	7%	5%	5%	4%

POSTSCHOOL OUTCOME DATA:

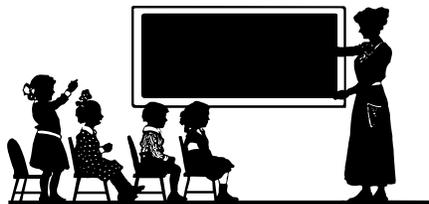
The Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) is an interagency data collection system that obtains follow-up data on former students. The most recent FETPIP data available reports on students who exited Florida public schools during the **2001-02** school year. The table below displays percent of students with disabilities and students identified as gifted exiting school in 2001-02 who were found employed between October and December 2002 or in continuing education (enrolled for the fall or preliminary winter/spring semester) in 2002.

	Students with Disabilities		Gifted Students	
	Employed	Cont. Ed.	Employed	Cont. Ed.
Okeechobee	42%	22%	22%	89%
Enrollment Group	45%	18%	43%	74%
State	45%	20%	38%	72%

THIRD GRADE PROMOTION AND RETENTION RATE:

The number of third grade students promoted, promoted with cause, and retained divided by the total year enrollment as reported in end of year (survey 5). The percent of students promoted with cause is a subset of total promoted. Total enrollment is the count of all students who attended school at any time during the school year. The results are reported for third grade students with disabilities and all third grade students for **2002-03**.

	2002-03					
	Students with Disabilities			All Students		
	Promoted	Promoted with Cause	Retained	Promoted	Promoted with Cause	Retained
Okeechobee	80%	39%	20%	85%	13%	15%
Enrollment Group	81%	22%	19%	89%	7%	11%
State	74%	17%	26%	85%	6%	15%



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, RESOURCE ROOM AND SEPARATE CLASS PLACEMENT, AGES 6-21:

The number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 in regular class, resource room, and separate class placement divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 reported in December (survey 9). Regular class includes students who spend 80 percent or more of their school week with nondisabled peers. Resource room includes students spending between 40 and 80 percent of their school week with nondisabled peers. Separate class includes students spending less than 40 percent of their week with nondisabled peers. The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2001-02** through **2003-04**.

	Regular Class			Resource Room			Separate Class		
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Okeechobee	59%	61%	64%	10%	9%	9%	24%	24%	21%
Enrollment Group	46%	46%	50%	27%	28%	26%	20%	21%	20%
State	48%	48%	50%	26%	26%	24%	22%	22%	22%

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTINGS, AGES 3-5:

The number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 who are served in early childhood settings, part-time early childhood and part-time early childhood special education settings, and early childhood special education settings divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 reported in December (survey 9). Students in early childhood settings receive all (100%) of their special education and related services in educational programs designed primarily for children without disabilities or in their home. Students in part-time early childhood and part-time early childhood special education settings receive special education and related services in multiple settings. Students in early childhood special education settings receive all (100%) of their special education and related services in educational programs designed primarily for children with disabilities housed in regular school buildings or other community-based settings. The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2001-02** through **2003-04**.

	Early Childhood Setting or Home			Part-Time Early Childhood/ Part-Time Early Childhood Special Education Setting			Early Childhood Special Education Setting		
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Okeechobee	2%	<1%	6%	48%	50%	63%	26%	39%	31%
Enrollment Group	10%	5%	5%	67%	66%	66%	20%	23%	25%
State	7%	7%	7%	59%	57%	57%	30%	31%	31%

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 **2001-02** through **2003-04**.

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Okeechobee	74%	67%	57%
Enrollment Group	56%	60%	59%
State	62%	61%	62%

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 **2002-03**.

		2002-03							
		In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions		Alternative Placement*	
		Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students						
Okeechobee Enrollment Group State	Okeechobee	6%	6%	15%	9%	0%	<1%	0%	<1%
	Enrollment Group	16%	11%	15%	7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
	State	13%	8%	14%	7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

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



SECTION THREE: PREVALENCE

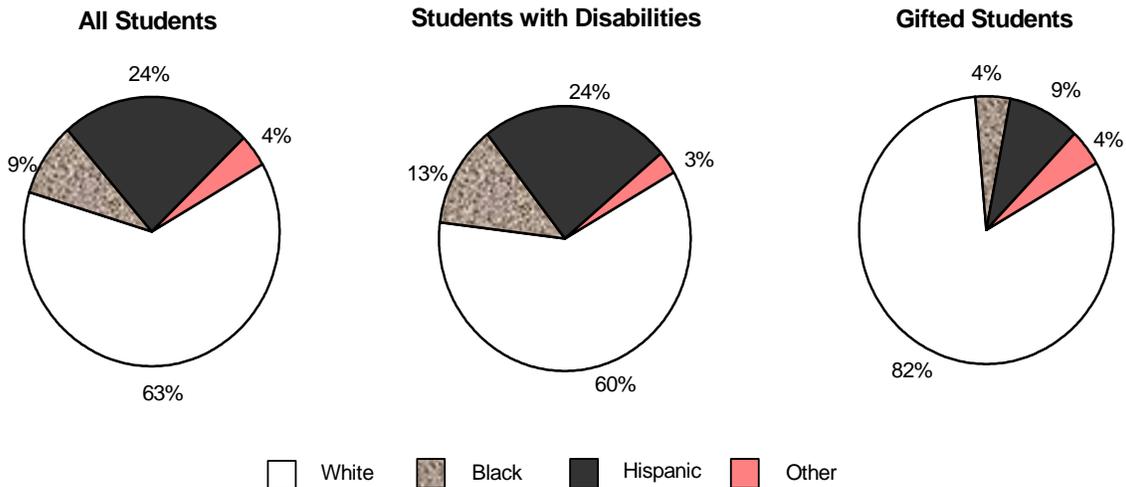
Prevalence refers to the proportion of the PK-12 population identified as exceptional at any given point in time. This section of the profile provides prevalence data by demographic characteristics.

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 2003** (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	50%	51%	64%	63%	60%	82%
Black	24%	28%	10%	9%	13%	4%
Hispanic	22%	18%	19%	24%	24%	9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	<1%	4%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Am Ind/Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%	<1%	2%	2%	2%
Multiracial	2%	2%	3%	1%	<1%	1%

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 2003** (survey 2).

	State		District	
	All Students	Gifted Students	All Students	Gifted Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	44%	21%	54%	28%
LEP	11%	3%	10%	0%

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 2003** (survey 2).

	All Students		SLD		EH/SED		EMH	
	State	District	State	District	State	District	State	District
White	50%	63%	52%	59%	48%	55%	32%	51%
Black	24%	9%	24%	10%	39%	38%	52%	29%
Hispanic	22%	24%	21%	28%	11%	7%	13%	19%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	<1%	0%
Am Ind/Alaskan Native	<1%	2%	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Multiracial	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%

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/SED, EMH, and speech impaired (SI) for the district and 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 2003** (survey 2).

	All Students		All Disabled	
	State	District	State	District
SLD	7%	11%	46%	52%
EH/SED	1%	2%	9%	8%
EMH	1%	2%	7%	7%
SI	2%	2%	14%	11%



Jim Horne, Commissioner

APPENDIX B:

Continuous Improvement Plans and Status Reports

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services**

**Continuous Improvement/Self Assessment Monitoring Plan
2002-2003**

District: Okeechobee	District Contact: Cathleen J. Blair, Director of Exceptional Student Education	Indicator: Standard Diploma Rate																								
Purpose: Qualified students with disabilities receiving standard diplomas will increase.																										
Baseline Data	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change																								
<p>Number of students by exceptionality graduating with a standard diploma compared to all exit options (special, certificate of completion, dropout, GED)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td colspan="3">2001-02</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SLD</td> <td>13 of 23</td> <td>57%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ED</td> <td>2 of 8</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HI</td> <td>1 of 2</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EMD</td> <td>0 of 6</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TMD</td> <td>0 of 8</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SED</td> <td>0 of 1</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>16 of 48</td> <td>33%</td> </tr> </table>	2001-02			SLD	13 of 23	57%	ED	2 of 8	25%	HI	1 of 2	50%	EMD	0 of 6	0%	TMD	0 of 8	0%	SED	0 of 1	0%	Total	16 of 48	33%	<p>Increase number of students exiting school with a standard diploma by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *increasing student participating in the general education curriculum through support and expansion of initiatives that provide resources for schools to implement service delivery models and effective instructional strategies. Promote successful participating in the general education curriculum in order to exit school with a standard diploma. *expanding staff development efforts to teachers on instructional accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities on statewide tests necessary for exiting school with a standard diploma. *continuing to support and expand initiatives that promote access to the general curriculum through the use of assistive technology. *providing information and education to parents, students and staff of curriculum course and assessment options that will impact receipt of a standard diploma. *Continuing to support the efforts of elementary and middle levels to integrate SLD and ED students in general curriculum. 	<p>Goal:</p> <p>The percent of students with disabilities exiting school with a standard diploma will increase by ten percent over baseline by 2004-05.</p> <p>Benchmarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *In 2002-03, the percent of students with disabilities exiting school with a standard diploma will increase to 36%. *In 2003-04, the percent of students with disabilities exiting school with a standard diploma will increase to 39%.
2001-02																										
SLD	13 of 23	57%																								
ED	2 of 8	25%																								
HI	1 of 2	50%																								
EMD	0 of 6	0%																								
TMD	0 of 8	0%																								
SED	0 of 1	0%																								
Total	16 of 48	33%																								

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services**

**Continuous Improvement/Self Assessment Monitoring Plan
2002-2003**

<u>District:</u> Okeechobee	<u>District Contact:</u> Cathleen J. Blair, <u>Director of Exceptional Student Education</u>	<u>Indicator:</u> Gifted students Performance on FCAT									
<u>Purpose:</u> Gifted students performance on FCAT will be consistently higher than general ed students at grade 3, 8 & 10.											
Baseline Data	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change									
<p>Average Scale Score on 01-02 FCAT Reading for Gifted students in Okeechobee County.</p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>Grade 3</u></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>Grade 8</u></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>Grade 10</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Gifted 366</td> <td style="text-align: center;">369</td> <td style="text-align: center;">385</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Gen Ed. 284</td> <td style="text-align: center;">292</td> <td style="text-align: center;">304</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 8</u>	<u>Grade 10</u>	Gifted 366	369	385	Gen Ed. 284	292	304	<p>Improve Gifted student performance on FCAT Reading by:</p> <p>Enhancing Gifted curriculum in the development of the skills required by assessment.</p> <p>Developing guidance and education materials to present to parents, students, and staff on the correlation between successful participation on FCAT and future educational goals.</p> <p>Improving delivery service models to enhance the reading performance on FCAT.</p>	<p>GOAL:</p> <p>The Scale Score for Gifted students on FCAT Reading in grades 3, 8 & 10 will be an average of 86 points higher than the general education students in Okeechobee County by 2004-05.</p> <p>BENCHMARKS:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">* In 2002-03, average Scale Score for grades 3, 8 & 10 will be 82 points higher than the general education students in Okeechobee County.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">*In 2003-04, average Scale Score for grades 3, 8 & 10 will be 84 points higher than the general education students in Okeechobee County.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">* In 2002-03, average Scale Score for grades 3, 8 & 10 will be 86 points higher than the general education students in Okeechobee County.</p>
<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 8</u>	<u>Grade 10</u>									
Gifted 366	369	385									
Gen Ed. 284	292	304									

**Continuous Improvement Monitoring Plan
2003-2004
Okeechobee County**

Goal #1:

The percent of students with disability exiting school with a Standard Diploma will increase by ten percent over baseline by 2004-2005.

Benchmark A:

In 2002-2003 the percent of students with disabilities exiting school with a Standard Diploma will increase 36%.

Baseline was 33% (2001-2002)

Results: 36 of 46 students with disabilities received a Standard Diploma or 78% exited with a Standard Diploma.

This was a percentage that we felt might have been skewed unrealistically due to no Trainable or Profound students graduated so we continued with our Benchmark B.

In 2003-04, the percent of students with disabilities exiting school with a Standard Diploma will increase to 39%.

The results for 2003-04 were as follows:

- Total OHS students graduated 339
- Total ESE students graduated 52 (15%)
- ESE students graduated with Standard Diploma 34 (65%)
- ESE students graduated with Special Diploma 16 (31%)
- ESE students graduated with Special Certificate of Completion 2 (4%)

Standard Diploma Exceptionalities:

SLD = 19 + 3 waivers

Gifted = 11

OHI = 1

Special Diploma Exceptionalities:

SLD = 4

TMD = 2

ED = 1

EMD = 7

OMI = 1

Language Impaired = 1

Special Certificate of Completion:

SLD = 1

EMD = 1

We have again surpassed our benchmark for the 2003-04 school year of 39% receiving a Standard Diploma.

Although we have surpassed our goal again this school year, we feel that the work we continue to do in the area of inclusion, FCAT remediation, accommodations and course modifications is extremely beneficial to allowing more students with disabilities access the general curriculum, ultimately graduating with a Standard Diploma.

We will strive to maintain an average of 45% of ESE students graduating during the 2004-05 school year with a Standard Diploma.

**Continuous Improvement Monitoring Plan
2003-2004
Okeechobee County**

Goal #2

The Scale Score for Gifted Students on FCAT Reading in grade 3, 8 and 10 will be an average of 86 points higher than the general education students in Okeechobee County by 2004-2005.

Benchmark:

Baseline was an average of 80 points higher for 2001-02.

In 2002-03, scores were not recorded in a manner that allowed the director to determine the average difference. A review of students that were gifted scoring a “3” or higher as compared to their general education peers revealed that 97% of students that were gifted scored 3 or better as compared to 42% of the general population. An assumption was made that on the average, gifted students did better than general education students.

Individual scores for gifted students have not been reviewed for the 2003-2004 school year. We do know that the average score for FCAT Reading was:

	GRADE 3	GRADE 8	GRADE 10
GIFTED STUDENTS	390	365	356
ALL STUDENTS	293	279	285
DIFFERENCE	+97	+86	+71

Our benchmark for 2003-04 was an average scale score of 84 points higher. We achieved our benchmark with an average score of 84.7

During the year we expanded a counseling component for secondary gifted students, modified the service delivery for secondary students and added a computer lab to enhance the research and writing skills for all students enrolled in gifted classes.

We are on track to reach our goal during the 2004-05 school year.

Activities included consultation from Mrs. Marty Orr regarding Rural and small districts approach to gifted classes; refining the schedule for secondary gifted students to ensure they are not missing essentials in academic preparation necessary for FCAT and continued development of test taking skills, writing an research.

APPENDIX C:

ESE Monitoring Team Members

**Okeechobee County
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Visit
November 22-24, 2003**

ESE Monitoring Team Members

Department of Education Staff

Bambi Lockman, Chief, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
Eileen Amy, Administrator, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance
Kim Komisar, Program Director, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance
April Katine, Program Specialist
Barbara McAnelly, Program Specialist
Anitra Moreland, Program Specialist
Angela Nathaniel, Program Specialist

Contracted Staff

Batya Elbaum, Project Director, University of Miami

APPENDIX D:

Survey Results

**2004 Parent Survey Report
Students with Disabilities
Okeechobee County**

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

The parent survey was sent to parents of the 1,634 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 175 parents (PK, n = 12; K-5, n = 85; 6-8, n = 36; 9 - 12, n = 42) representing 11% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 104 families were returned as undeliverable, representing 6% of the sample. Parents represented the following students with disabilities: educable mentally handicapped, trainable mentally handicapped, orthopedically impaired, speech impaired, language impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, visually impaired, emotionally handicapped, specific learning disabled, hospital/homebound, autistic, developmentally delayed, and other health impaired.

**% Always/Almost
Always/Frequently**

Overall, I am satisfied with:

- the way I am treated by school personnel. 86
- the level of knowledge and experience of school personnel. 76
- how quickly services are implemented following an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) decision. 75
- the exceptional education services my child receives. 75
- the way special education teachers and regular education teachers work together. 74
- the amount of time my child spends with regular education students. 73
- my child's academic progress. 66
- the effect of exceptional student education on my child's self-esteem. 65

My child:

- has friends at school. 86
- is happy at school. 77
- is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 76
- spends most of the school day involved in productive activities. 75
- receives all the special education and related services on his/her IEP. 73

Starred items are for parents of students in grades 8 and above.

At my child’s IEP meetings we have talked about:

- all of my child’s needs. 85
- whether my child should get accommodations (special testing conditions), for example, extra time. 64
- ways that my child could spend time with students in regular classes. 60
- whether my child would take the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test). 48
- * which diploma my child may receive. 46
- whether my child needed speech/language services. 45
- whether my child needed services beyond the regular school year. 45
- * the requirements for different diplomas. 38
- whether my child needed physical and/or occupational therapy. 34
- whether my child needed psychological counseling services. 36
- whether my child needed transportation. 32

My child’s teachers:

- are available to speak with me. 82
- expect my child to succeed. 82
- set appropriate goals for my child. 75
- give students with disabilities extra time or different assignments, if needed. 74
- call me or send me notes about my child. 73
- give homework that meets my child’s needs. 66

My child’s school:

- encourages me to participate in my child’s education. 78
- makes sure I understand my child’s IEP. 78
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 74
- addresses my child’s individual needs. 73
- encourages acceptance of students with disabilities. 72
- does all it can to keep students from dropping out of school. 71
- provides students with disabilities updated books and materials. 71
- wants to hear my ideas. 68
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 66
- * offers a variety of vocational courses, such as computers and business technology. 65
- offers students with disabilities the classes they need to graduate with a standard diploma. 64
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child’s IEP. 64
- involves students with disabilities in clubs, sports, or other activities. 63
- * provides information to students about education and jobs after high school. 61
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 56

Starred items are for parents of students in grades 8 and above.

**% Always/Almost
Always/Frequently**

- * informed me, beginning when my child turned 14, that one purpose of the IEP meeting was to discuss a plan for my child’s transition out of high school. 51

Parent Participation

- I have attended my child’s IEP meetings. 91
- I meet with my child’s teachers to discuss my child’s needs and progress. 85
- I am comfortable talking about my child with school staff. 84
- I participate in school activities with my child. 66
- I attend meetings of the PTA/PTO. 28
- I have heard about the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (“FDLRS”) and the services they provide to families of children with disabilities. 22
- I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement. 22
- I attend meetings of organizations for parents of students with disabilities. 22
- I have used parent support services in my area. 17

Starred items are for parents of students in grades 8 and above.

**2004 Parent Survey Report
Students Identified as Gifted
Okeechobee County**

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

The parent survey was sent to parents of the 161 students identified as gifted for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 64 parents (KG-5, n = 24; 6-8, n = 23; 9 - 12, n = 17) representing 40% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 3 families were returned as undeliverable, representing 2% of the sample.

% Yes

Overall, I am satisfied with:

- the effect of gifted services on my child's self-esteem. 86
- gifted teachers' expertise in teaching students identified as gifted. 86
- regular teachers' subject area knowledge. 85
- my child's academic progress. 84
- how quickly services were implemented following an initial request for evaluation. 84
- gifted teachers' subject area knowledge. 84
- regular teachers' expertise in teaching students identified as gifted. 70
- the gifted services my child receives. 68

In regular classes, my child:

- has friends at school. 95
- has his/her social and emotional needs met at school. 89
- is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 89
- is usually happy at school. 88
- has creative outlets at school. 71
- is academically challenged at school. 64

In gifted classes, my child:

- has friends at school. 98
- is usually happy at school. 95
- has his/her social and emotional needs met at school. 92
- is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 85
- has creative outlets at school. 80
- is academically challenged at school. 73

My child's regular teachers:

- expect appropriate behavior. 98
- are available to speak with me. 91
- provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups. 85
- give homework that meets my child's needs. 78
- have access to the latest information and technology. 77
- set appropriate goals for my child. 74
- relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits. 64
- call me or send me notes about my child. 62

My child's gifted teachers:

- expect appropriate behavior. 98
- provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups. 91
- are available to speak with me. 89
- set appropriate goals for my child. 88
- call me or send me notes about my child. 76
- relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits. 70
- have access to the latest information and technology. 70
- give homework that meets my child's needs. 52

My child's home school:

- treats me with respect. 93
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 89
- encourages me to participate in my child's education. 82
- wants to hear my ideas. 76
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 69
- addresses my child's individual needs. 64
- implements my ideas. 61
- makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP. 55
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 52
- provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials. 51
- involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP). 49
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP. 48

My child's 2nd school:

- treats me with respect. 96
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 88
- provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials. 86

	% Yes
• encourages me to participate in my child's education.	80
• addresses my child's individual needs.	79
• wants to hear my ideas.	73
• makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP.	66
• implements my ideas.	62
• informs me about all of the services available to my child.	61
• involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP).	57
• explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP.	53
• sends me information about activities and workshops for parents.	49

**The following questions relate primarily to high school students.
Students identified as gifted:**

• have the option of taking a variety of vocational courses.	88
• are provided with information about options for education after high school.	83
• are provided with career counseling.	76
• are provided with the opportunity to participate in externships or mentorships.	69

Parent Participation

• I participate in school activities with my child.	88
• I have attended one or more meetings about my child during this school year.	77
• I am a member of the PTA/PTO.	42
• I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement.	34
• I have used parent support services in my area.	12
• I belong to an organization for parents of students identified as gifted.	9

APPENDIX E:

Forms Review

**Okeechobee County
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Report
Forms Review**

This forms review was completed as a component of the continuous improvement plan monitoring visit conducted on November 21-23, 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>Parent Notification of Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting Form <i>Parent Participation Form O-EX-9</i> 34 CFR 300.345</p>
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The following must be addressed:

- A statement that a copy of the procedural safeguards is being provided upon notification of the IEP meeting must be included. The statement on your form does not specifically mention procedural safeguards or the IDEA.

<p>Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting Form <i>Individual Education Plan (IEP/EP) Form O-EX-13</i> 34 CFR 300.347</p>
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The following must be addressed:

- An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with non-disabled students in general education classes must be included on the Individual Education Plan form.
- “Special Certificate of Completion” must be removed from the diploma options choices. Students do not work towards a special certificate of completion. This may be what they ultimately receive, but it should not be indicated as a diploma option on an IEP.
- The statement “No Services Needed: The team feels that no transition supports, services, or skills are needed at this time in the following areas:” is misleading. It appears as though no services are needed in any of the transition areas. A more appropriate statement would be something such as “If no services are needed in any of the areas below the reason why will be indicated.”
- The statement “Student will NOT participate in state and district wide assessments because: _ Functioning Level, _ Emotional level, _ Test readability level, _other” indicates that it is acceptable to make the exemption determination from statewide testing on indicators other than the state board criteria. A correct statement would be “ Students must meet both of the following criteria to be exempt from statewide testing: _ low cognitive ability, _ receiving extensive direct instruction to accomplish the application

and transfer of skills and competencies needed for domestic, community living, leisure, and vocational activities.”

Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation

Form *Consent for Formal Individual Evaluation Form O-EX-04*

34 CFR 300.503 and 300.505

This form contains the components for compliance.

Recommendation:

- The statement “Both federal and state regulations require that you be informed of your rights in this matter.” This statement would be clearer if you said “You have specific rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Act which are included in the Procedural Safeguards that are attached.”

Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation

Form *Parent Notice/Consent For Reevaluation Form O-EX-24*

34 CFR 300.503 and 300.505

This form contains the components for compliance.

Recommendation:

- The statement “Both federal and state regulations require that you be informed of your rights in this matter.” This statement would be clearer if you said “You have specific rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Act which are included in your Procedural Safeguards that are attached.”

Notice and Consent for Initial Placement

Form *Eligibility And Assignment Staffing Form Form O-EX-10*

34 CFR 300.503 and 300.505

The following must be addressed:

- A statement must be included indicating “You have specific rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Act which are included in your Procedural Safeguards that are attached.”
- A statement of where a copy of the procedural safeguards may be obtained must be included and identify two sources.
- The boxes to “approve” or “disapprove” should be changed to “reviewed”. A staffing committee finds a student eligible or ineligible. The boxes make it appear that the ESE director approves or disapproved the committee’s recommendations.

Recommendation:

- There is no place on this form to indicate if a student is being placed in special education on a temporary IEP (e.g., transfer student)

Notice of Change in Placement

Form *Informed Prior Notice Of Change In Placement and/or Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) Form O-EX-13n*

34 CFR 300.503 and 300.505

The following must be addressed:

- The statement “Your child’s individual education plan (IEP) or program was revised” should be changed to “is being proposed to be revised” to reflect that the change has not taken place until the parent receives prior written notice.

Notice of Change in FAPE

Form *Informed Prior Notice Of Change In Placement and/or Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) Form O-EX-13n*

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

The following must be addressed:

- The statement “Your child’s individual education plan (IEP) or program was revised” should be changed to “is being proposed to be revised” to reflect that the change has not taken place until the parent receives prior written notice.

Informed Notice of Refusal

Form *Notice of Refusal To Take A Specific Action Form O-EX-17*

34 CFR 300.503

The following must be addressed:

- A statement of where a copy of the procedural safeguards may be obtained must be included and identify two sources.
- A statement of a least two sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of IDEA must be included.
- A statement that the parents of a child with a disability have protections under the procedural safeguards of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be included.

Recommendation:

- The form only includes statements to include refusal to change a student’s placement. It should also include a way to refuse other actions such as: testing and issues involving FAPE (addition or deletion of services). A blank line to be filled in “Other actions refused” would suffice.

Notice of Dismissal

Form *Eligibility And Assignment Staffing Form Form O-EX-10*

34 CFR 300.503 and 300.505

The following must be addressed:

- A statement of where a copy of the procedural safeguards may be obtained must be included and identify two sources.

- The boxes to “approve” or “disapprove” must be changed to “reviewed”. An IEP team dismisses a student from exceptional education services. The boxes make it appear that the ESE director approves or disapproved the committee’s recommendations.

Notice of Ineligibility
Form *Eligibility And Assignment Staffing Form O-EX-10*
34 CFR 300.503 and 300.505

The following must be addressed:

- A statement of where a copy of the procedural safeguards may be obtained must be included and identify two sources.
- The boxes to “approve” or “disapprove” must be changed to “reviewed”. A staffing committee finds a student eligible or ineligible. The boxes make it appear that the ESE director approves or disapproved the committee’s recommendations.

Documentation of Staffing Form
Form *Eligibility And Assignment Staffing Form O-EX-10*
34 CFR 300.534 and 300.503

The following must be addressed:

- A statement of where a copy of the procedural safeguards may be obtained must be included and identify two sources.
- The boxes to “approve” or “disapprove” must be changed to “reviewed”. A staffing committee finds a student eligible or ineligible. The boxes make it appear that the ESE director approves or disapproved the committee’s recommendations.

Confidentiality of Information
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Part 99 34 CFR 300.503

This form contains the basic components for compliance.

Educational Plan
Form *Gifted Program Educational Plan (EP) Form O-EX-13EP*

The following must be addressed:

- The Parent Participation Form must include a line to indicate that the purpose of the meeting is to develop an education plan.

It was noted that the district utilizes the procedural safeguards wording provided by the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.

APPENDIX F:

Glossary of Acronyms

Glossary of Acronyms

Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CIP	Continuous improvement plan
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
DOE	Department of Education
EMH	Educable mentally handicapped
EP	Educational plan for gifted students
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
LEA	Local education agency
LEP	Limited English proficient
POGS	Parents of gifted students
Pre-K (PK)	Pre-kindergarten
SIMs	Strategic Instruction Model
S/L	Speech/Language