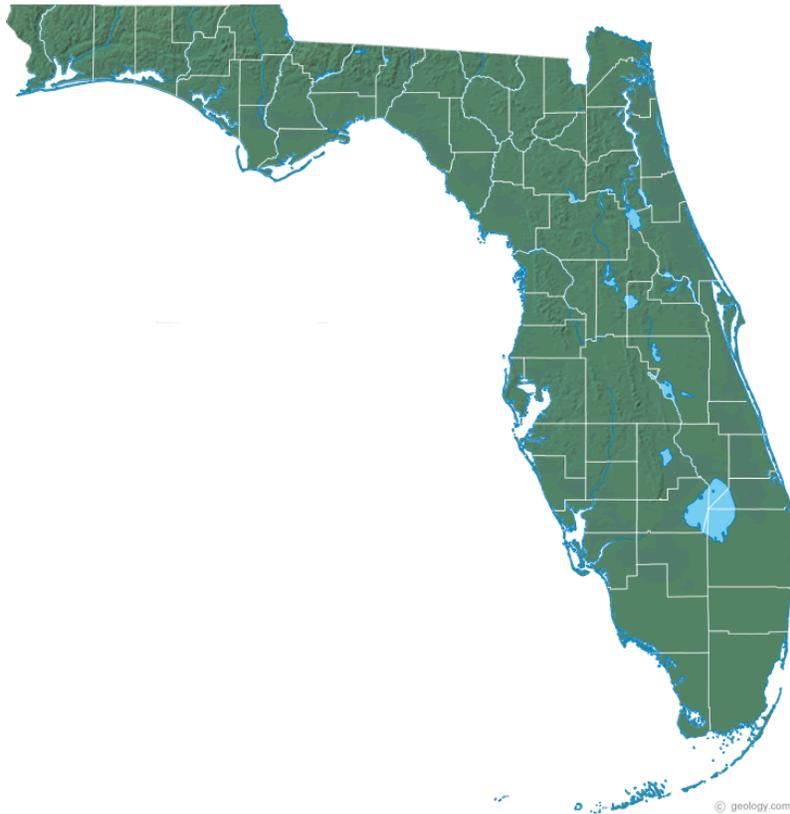


St. Lucie County School District

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring

Exceptional Student Education Programs

May 5-7, 2009



Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
Florida Department of Education

This publication is available through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Florida Department of Education. For additional information on this publication, or for a list of available publications, contact the Clearinghouse Information Center, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Division of Public Schools, Florida Department of Education, Room 628 Turlington Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400.

Telephone: (850) 245-0477

Fax: (850) 245-0987

E-mail: cicbiscs@FLDOE.org

Web site: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

Web site: www.fldoe.org/ese

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

T. WILLARD FAIR, *Chairman*

Members

PETER BOULWARE

DR. AKSHAY DESAI

ROBERTO MARTÍNEZ

JOHN R. PADGET

KATHLEEN SHANAHAN

LINDA K. TAYLOR

Dr. Eric J. Smith
Commissioner of Education



July 22, 2009

Mr. Michael J. Lannon, Superintendent
St. Lucie County School District
4204 Okeechobee Road
Fort Pierce, Florida 34947-7299

Dear Superintendent Lannon:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report of On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Programs* for St. Lucie County School District. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to our visit on May 5-7, 2009, including student record reviews, interviews with school and district staff, classroom observations, and the 2008-09 ESE compliance self-assessment conducted by the school district. The final report will be placed on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' Web site and may be viewed at <http://www.fl DOE.org/e se/mon-home.asp>.

The St. Lucie County School District was selected for on-site monitoring due to dispute resolution requests (due process hearing requests, state complaints, and mediations) being greater than 150% of the state rate and findings of noncompliance related to the implementation of individual educational plans (IEPs). The specific activities conducted in your school district were based on review and analysis of the most current district data related to dispute resolution and IEP implementation.

Mr. Bill Tomlinson, ESE Director, and his staff were very helpful during the Bureau's preparation for the visit and the on-site monitoring. In addition, Bureau staff members were welcomed and assisted by the principals and other staff members at each of the schools that were visited. The Bureau's on-site monitoring activities identified one discrepancy requiring corrective action.

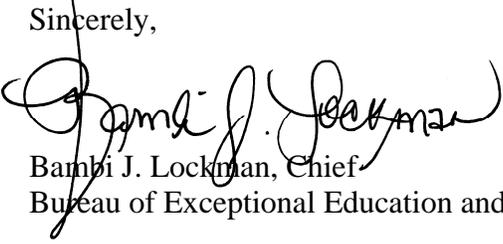
BAMBI J. LOCKMAN
Chief

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Mr. Michael J. Lannon
July 22, 2009
Page 2

Thank you for your continuing commitment to improve services for exceptional education for students in St. Lucie County. If there are any questions regarding this final report, please contact Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance, at (850) 245-0476, or via electronic mail at patricia.howell@fldoe.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bambi J. Lockman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

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

Enclosure

cc: Barbara Slaga
Bill Tomlinson
Kim C. Komisar
Patricia Howell
Jill Snelson
Ken Johnson

**St. Lucie County School District
Final Report: On-Site Focused Monitoring**

May 5-7, 2009

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

St. Lucie County School District

**Final Report: On-Site Monitoring
May 5-7, 2009**

Table of Contents

Authority 1
Monitoring Process 1
 District Selection..... 1
 On-Site Activities..... 2
 Monitoring Team 2
 Schools 2
 Data Collection..... 3
Results..... 3
Corrective Action..... 3
Technical Assistance..... 4
Glossary of Acronyms 5

St. Lucie County School District

On-Site Focused Monitoring May 5-7, 2009

Final Report

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 ss. 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and ESE programs; 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 Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR § 300.1(d))), and districts are required to make a good faith effort to assist children with disabilities to achieve their stated goals and objectives in the least restrictive environment. In accordance with IDEA, the Department is responsible for ensuring that its requirements are carried out and that each educational program for children with disabilities administered in the state meets the educational requirements of the state (34 CFR §§300.120, 300.149, and 300.600). The monitoring system reflects the Department's commitment to provide assistance, service, and accountability to school districts, and is designed to emphasize improved educational outcomes for students while continuing to conduct those activities necessary to ensure compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

Monitoring Process

District Selection

For the 2008-09 school year, the Bureau's ESE monitoring system comprised **basic** (Level 1) and **focused** (Level 2) self-assessment activities as well as **on-site visits** conducted by Bureau staff (Level 3). The system was developed to ensure that school districts comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and state statutes and rules, while focusing on improving student outcomes related to State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators.

Decisions regarding the components of Level 1 and Level 2 monitoring for 2008-09 were driven by: issues raised in recent Office of Program Policy and Governmental Accountability (OPPAGA) reports and legislative action regarding gifted education and matrix of services; issues addressed during the on-site monitoring of Florida's ESE programs by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP); and the requirements of the SPP/Annual Performance Report (APR).

All districts were required to complete Level 1 compliance self-assessment activities. In addition, those districts that were newly identified for targeted planning or activities by the Bureau SPP indicator teams for one or more selected SPP indicators were required to conduct Level 2 self-assessment activities using indicator-specific protocols. Districts selected for Level 3 monitoring conducted Level 1 activities, and Level 2 activities as applicable, in addition to participating in on-site monitoring by Bureau staff. Preliminary selection of districts for consideration for Level 3 monitoring was based on the following, and resulted in the identification of 22 districts:

- >150% of the state rate for students reported at the 254 and 255 **matrix** levels (state rate for 254: 4.84%; 255: 2.08%; 254/255 combined: 6.92%)
- >150% of the state rate for formal requests for **dispute resolution** (state rate: 0.12%)
- **Correction of noncompliance** not completed within the required timeline (one year from identification)

On-site monitoring was reserved for those situations that require classroom observations or staff interviews, and for those that could not adequately be addressed through student record desk reviews (e.g., IEP implementation; services being provided in accordance with the matrix). The list of 22 districts was further narrowed by raising the limit for the matrix of services to 200% of the state rate, and consideration was given to any districts that met the criteria for selection in more than one area (i.e., matrix, dispute resolution, and correction of noncompliance).

In a letter dated March 6, 2009, St. Lucie County School District was informed that the Bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit based upon dispute resolution requests (due process hearing requests, state complaints, and mediations) being greater than 150% of the state rate and findings of noncompliance related to the implementation of individual educational plans (IEPs).

On-Site Activities

Monitoring Team

On May 5-7, 2009, the following Bureau staff members conducted an on-site monitoring visit to review the educational services for students with disabilities enrolled in the St. Lucie County School District:

- Ken Johnson, Program Specialist (Team Leader)
- Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance
- Demetria Harvell, Program Director, Dispute Resolution
- Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist
- Sheryl Sandvoss, Program Specialist
- Jill Snelson, Program Specialist

Schools

The following schools were identified for on-site visits and/or targeted record reviews based on an analysis of data related to dispute resolution, including parent requests for information or assistance in the delivery of ESE services for students enrolled in the district, as well as for the number of students in the school enrolled in ESE programs:

- Bayshore Elementary
- Lakewood Park Elementary

- Manatee Academy
- Morningside Elementary
- Samuel S. Gaines Academy
- St. Lucie West Centennial High School

Data Collection

Monitoring activities included the following:

- District-level interviews: 1
- School-level interviews: 21
- Record reviews: 26
 - IEPs
 - Matrixes of Services
 - Supporting documentation of services
- Classroom observations: 26
- Case studies: 26

Results

The information reported here includes data collected through the activities of the on-site monitoring as well as the ESE compliance self-assessment.

1. There are approximately 38,837 students (prekindergarten – Grade 12) served in the St. Lucie County School District, with approximately 13% of this population identified as students with disabilities (Survey 2, October 2008).
2. Each of the 26 records reviewed included a current IEP that had been developed appropriately.
3. The case study process included review of records, interviews with district staff, and observations of classrooms and specific students; case studies indicated that the delivery of services was consistent with the IEPs for the selected students.
4. The IEP for one student included related services and accommodations, but did not include direct special education services. In order to be an eligible student under IDEA, a student must be a student with a disability in need of and receiving special education and related services.

Corrective Action

For the student whose IEP did not include direct special education services, the IEP team shall reconvene no later than August 31, 2009, to implement the reevaluation process to determine whether the student continues to be a student with a disability in need of special education and related services. Identifying information regarding this student has been provided to the district under separate cover.

- If the student no longer evidences a disability, or if the student has a disability but only needs related services and/or accommodations, the student must be dismissed from ESE services. On the latter case, the team should determine whether consideration for eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is appropriate, with follow-up as required.

- If the student is determined to continue to be an eligible student under IDEA, the team must revise the IEP to include appropriate direct special education services.
- Documentation of the IEP team's determination, including but not limited to the following, shall be provided to the Bureau no later than September 8, 2009: documentation of the reevaluation process; the revised IEP, if appropriate; written notice of any required proposal or refusal provided by the district; and any conference notes or meeting notices.

Technical Assistance

The following is a partial list of Bureau staff available for future technical assistance in dispute resolution and implementation of IEPs.

ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance

(850) 245-0476

Kim Komisar, Ph.D., Administrator

Kim.Komisar@fldoe.org

Demetria Harvell, Program Director
Dispute Resolution

Demetria.Harvell@fldoe.org

Patricia Howell, Program Director
Monitoring and Compliance

Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org

Brenda Fisher, Program Specialist
Monitoring and Compliance

Brenda.Fisher@fldoe.org

Sheryl Sandvoss, Program Specialist
Program Development

Sheryl.Sandvoss@fldoe.org

Jill Snelson, Program Specialist
Bureau-District Monitoring Liaison – St. Lucie County School District

Jill.Snelson@fldoe.org

Appendix:

Glossary of Acronyms

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

Glossary of Acronyms

APR	Annual Performance Report
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
ESE	Exceptional student education
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
OPPAGA	Office of Program Policy and Governmental Accountability
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
PT	Physical therapy
SPP	State Performance Plan



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

ESE 312985C