

Florida Department of Corrections

Final Report: On-Site Monitoring Exceptional Student Education Programs

October 3–5, 2011



Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

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BRIC website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/clerhome.asp>

Bureau website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

Email: BRIC@fldoe.org

Telephone: (850) 245-0477

Fax: (850) 245-0987

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November 21, 2011

Mr. Allen Overstreet, Education Administrator
Florida Department of Corrections
Bureau of Re-Entry Program and Education
501 South Calhoun Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2500

Dear Mr. Overstreet:

We are pleased to provide you with the *Final Report: On-Site Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs* for the Florida Department of Corrections (DOC). This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site monitoring visit to DOC facilities on October 3–5, 2011. Those information sources included student record reviews, interviews with educational and central office staff, classroom observations, and feedback provided by the student focus groups. The final report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

Mr. John Howle, Special Education Administrator, and his staff were very helpful during the Bureau's preparation for the visit and during the on-site monitoring. In addition, the education supervisors and other staff members at each of the institutions welcomed and assisted the monitoring team during the on-site visit. The Bureau's on-site monitoring activities identified a concern as well as strengths related to DOC's special education services.

CATHY BISHOP, INTERIM CHIEF
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Mr. Allen Overstreet
November 21, 2011
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Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in DOC. If there are any questions regarding this final report, please contact Patricia Howell, Program Director, Monitoring and Compliance, at (850) 245-0476 or via email at Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cathy Bishop". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Cathy Bishop, Interim Chief
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Enclosure

cc: John Howle
Karen Denbroeder
Patricia Howell
Vicki L. Eddy

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Florida Department of Corrections
On-Site Monitoring
Exceptional Student Education Programs
October 3–5, 2011

Final Report

Authority

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

In fulfilling this requirement, the Bureau monitors ESE programs provided by district school boards in accordance with §§1001.42, 1003.57, and 1003.573, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and ESE services; provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. The monitoring system is designed to emphasize improved educational outcomes for students while ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

Monitoring Process

Decisions regarding the type and extent of monitoring activities, including the need for on-site visits, are based on the most current data available for a given school district. Due to the unique nature of educational programs implemented in correctional settings, on-site monitoring of special education services in Florida Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities is conducted on a cyclical basis. This schedule allows Bureau staff to effectively target technical assistance to DOC staff. In addition, DOC participates in the Bureau's self-assessment process each year.

Background Information

In a letter dated August 22, 2011, the Education Administrator at DOC was informed that the Bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit related to DOC's ESE programs for the 2011–12 school year. Based on the results of prior on-site visits and the results of DOC's 2010–11 self-assessment, it was decided that the October 3–5, 2011, on-site monitoring activities would focus on the development and implementation of the individual educational plans (IEPs) at the three correctional institutions.

On-Site Activities

Monitoring Team

On October 3–5, 2011, the following Bureau staff members conducted the on-site monitoring visit:

- Vicki Eddy, Compliance Specialist (Team Leader)
- Lisa Robinson, Program Specialist, Juvenile Justice Education

Coordinator for DOC during the Monitoring Visit

- John Howle, Special Education Administrator

Correctional Institutions

Correctional institutions visited included the following:

- Lancaster Correctional Institution
- Marion Correctional Institution
- Sumter Correctional Institution

Student Focus Groups

Nine students from three correctional institutions participated in student focus groups conducted by Bureau staff. These students were selected from the group of students chosen for case studies. The students who participated in the focus groups shared the following:

- Their input was considered in the IEP process.
- The services on their IEPs were being provided, including during confinement.
- The services on their IEPs help the students be more successful in school.
- Their ESE teachers were very helpful in meeting individual needs.

Data Collection

Monitoring activities at three correctional institutions included the following:

- Record reviews – 15 students
- Observations – 6 classrooms
- Student focus groups – 9 students
- Educational staff interviews:
 - Central office – 2 participants
 - Education supervisors – 3 participants
 - Placement transition specialist – 1 participant
 - General education teachers – 3 participants
 - ESE teachers – 5 participants

Review of Records

DOC was asked to provide the following documents for each student selected for review:

- Previous IEP
- Current IEP (including the notice of conference)
- Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) scores
- Progress on annual goals
- Program participation record
- Schedule

Results

The following results reflect the data collected through the activities of the on-site monitoring as well as commendations and a concern.

Commendations

All of the correctional institutions visited are to be commended for the following:

- Educational staff members demonstrated a high level of professionalism and commitment to the students.
- Students were engaged in the classrooms and working quietly.
- ESE and general education teachers demonstrated knowledge of students' individual needs.
- Teachers engage in ongoing meetings to monitor and discuss the educational progress and needs of individual students.
- Students with disabilities with a release date prior to age 22 are given priority for educational services, if there is limited space in the classrooms.
- Services are provided to students in confinement every 10 days, which is more frequently than the students' IEPs require, with contact logs kept for students in confinement, documenting work that has been provided and completed.
- ESE teachers provide students with more than the required services on the IEP despite large case loads.
- As part of DOC's academic procedures, the general education teachers use an individual academic plan for students with disabilities, which includes the academic goals, supplemental resources and date provided, and tracking of progress for TABE scores.
- Vocational programs allow inmates to exit with certifications at different occupational completion levels based on the number of hours earned prior to the inmate's release, enabling students to be hired and to build upon skills.
- Adult Basic Education (ABE) curriculum with a General Educational Development (GED) option is provided to all inmates in educational programs; however, students with disabilities who earn a GED may continue with ABE.

In addition, the following commendations relate to Lancaster Correctional Institution, a youthful offender facility for ages 14 to 24:

- Between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011, 36 inmates with disabilities out of 144 total inmates receiving educational services earned a GED.
- A wide variety of vocational programs are offered including commercial foods and culinary arts, automotive service technology, carpentry, personal computer support services, environmental services, printing/graphic arts, and landscape irrigation.
- Between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011, 50 inmates with disabilities out of 184 total inmates enrolled in a vocational program earned a vocational certificate.
- Transition services beyond the 100-hour transition class are offered to inmates by a designated staff member who contacts outside agencies regarding referral for housing, social services, and available educational facilities for GED completion.
- The Florida Ready to Work program certified over 350 inmates from June 2010 through April 2011, including students with disabilities.
- A graduation ceremony is provided four times a year with participation of parents and family, incorporating cap, gown, and certificate for students, including students with disabilities, who earn a GED and/or a certificate for completion of a vocational program.

The following commendations relate to Marion Correctional Institution, which houses a small group of youthful offenders:

- Between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011, 11 inmates with disabilities out of 62 total inmates receiving educational services earned a GED.
- A variety of vocational programs are offered including carpentry, cabinetmaking, mechanical drafting, electrical wiring, water treatment, and waste water treatment.
- Between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011, 10 inmates with disabilities out of 86 total inmates enrolled in a vocational program earned a vocational certificate.
- Student Study Teams, including the ESE teacher, general education teacher, vocational teacher, and education supervisor, meet weekly to discuss students' progress and recommendations based on individual needs.
- A student with a disability enrolled full-time in the vocational program is receiving help in math one day a week to increase abilities in cabinetmaking.
- Classrooms are set up by grade level (literacy program to pre-GED).

The following commendations relate to Sumter Correctional Institution, which houses a small group of youthful offenders:

- Between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011, 21 inmates with disabilities out of 66 total inmates receiving educational services earned a GED.
- A variety of vocational programs are offered including automotive service technology, electronics technology, and masonry brick and block.
- Between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011, 13 inmates with disabilities out of 82 total inmates enrolled in a vocational program earned a vocational certificate.
- Inmate peer tutors assist teachers in the classroom by working with students individually and in small groups.

- Improving students' reading skills for GED preparation is a focus of the program and includes the use of Lexia and Soliloquy computer software programs for phonics and fluency.
- The education supervisor strongly encourages all staff and inmate tutors to watch the video *How Difficult Can This Be?:The F.A.T. (Frustration, Anxiety, and Tension) City Workshop* dramatizing the classroom experience for students with disabilities and discussing effective strategies.
- One of the ESE teachers was recently selected as Teacher of the Year by DOC's Special Education Administrator.

Concern

During the June 21–23, 2011, on-site monitoring visit, Bureau staff noted a concern that some of the measurable annual goals relied on the short-term objectives for total clarity. The same concern was found at the three correctional facilities visited as the majority of the IEPs reviewed were developed prior to training being provided. In response to this concern, DOC staff reformatted the IEP form on August 3, 2011, and provided training for the appropriate staff at 18 correctional institutions during August and September 2011, regarding use of the revised IEP form and writing measurable annual goals. Bureau staff noted that the IEPs reviewed that were developed after the provision of training showed improvement in this area. In addition, DOC staff is scheduled to provide follow-up training to the appropriate staff members at 18 correctional facilities.

Technical Assistance

Specific information for technical assistance, support, and guidance regarding IEP development can be found in the *Exceptional Student Education Compliance Manual 2011–12*.

Bureau Contacts

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

Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems

(850) 245-0476

Karen Denbroeder, Administrator
Karen.Denbroeder@fldoe.org

Patricia Howell, Program Director
Monitoring and Compliance
Patricia.Howell@fldoe.org

Suzan Bastos, Compliance Specialist
Suzan.Bastos@fldoe.org

Liz Conn, Compliance Specialist
Liz.Conn@fldoe.org

Vicki Eddy, Compliance Specialist
Vicki.Eddy@fldoe.org

Brenda Fisher, Compliance Specialist
Brenda.Fisher@fldoe.org

Annette Oliver, Compliance Specialist
Annette.Oliver@fldoe.org

Instructional Support Systems

(850) 245-0475

Sheila Gritz, Program Specialist
Program Development
Sheila.Gritz@fldoe.org

Anne Bozik, Compliance Specialist
Anne.Bozik@fldoe.org

Misty Bradley, Compliance Specialist
Misty.Bradley@fldoe.org

Karen Deware, Compliance Specialist
Karlene.Deware@fldoe.org

Derek Hemenway, Compliance Specialist
Derek.Hemenway@fldoe.org

Jacqueline Roumou, Compliance Specialist
Jacqueline.Roumou@fldoe.org

Bureau Resource and Information Center

(850) 245-0477

Judith White, Director
BRIC@fldoe.org

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Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABE	Adult Basic Education
Bureau	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BRIC	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Resource and Information Center
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DOC	Department of Corrections
ESE	Exceptional student education
F.A.T.	Frustration, Anxiety, and Tension
F.S.	Florida Statutes
GED	General Educational Development
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
TABE	Test for Adult Basic Education



Florida Department of Education
Gerard Robinson, Commissioner

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