

**2013-14 Exceptional Student Education
Monitoring and Assistance
On-Site Visit Report**

**Alachua County School District
March 12-14, 2014**



This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), Division of Public Schools, Florida Department of Education, and is available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/mon-home.asp>. For information on available resources, contact the BEESS Resource and Information Center (BRIC).

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December 10, 2014

Dr. Owen Roberts, Superintendent
Alachua County School District
620 East University Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32601-5448

Dear Superintendent Roberts:

We are pleased to provide you with the **2013-14 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Alachua County School District**. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site monitoring visit to your school district on March 12-14, 2014. Those information sources included interviews with district and school staff, student focus groups, student record reviews, **Local Educational Agency Profiles, Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment** and an action-planning and problem-solving process. This report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' (BEESS) website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

The 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those State Performance Plan indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for coordinated early intervening services and those indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities. Additionally, the process focuses on a shift from ESE compliance to outcomes to prepare all students for college and career readiness, which include: increasing standard diploma graduates; decreasing the number of students dropping out of school; increasing regular class placement; decreasing the need for seclusion and restraint; and eliminating disproportionality in eligibility identification and discipline.

The Alachua County School District was selected for an on-site visit due to issues relating to discipline and least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. The on-site visit was conducted by a state support team (SST) that included BEESS and discretionary project staff.

Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Chief
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Superintendent Roberts
December 10, 2014
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Ms. Kathy Black, ESE executive director, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for the on-site visit and throughout the visit. In addition, the principals and other staff members at the schools visited welcomed the SST and demonstrated a commitment to the education of students in the school district.

As part of the SST's visit, representatives from the school district's ESE department, the schools visited and other school district staff participated in an action-planning and problem-solving process. This group reviewed the school district's data collected prior to and during the on-site visit, and came to consensus on a priority goal related to reducing the out-of-school suspension. An action plan, developed around that goal, will be implemented by the ESE department with the assistance of designated discretionary project staff from the SST.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Alachua County School District. If there are any questions regarding this report, please contact me at 850-245-0475 or via email at monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org.

Sincerely,

Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Chief
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Enclosure

cc: Kathy Black
Jan Benet
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Patricia Howell
Leanne Grillot

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Alachua County School District

March 12-14, 2014

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

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Alachua County School District

March 12-14, 2014

Authority

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), 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 (sections 1001.03(3), 1003.571 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, BEESS monitors ESE programs provided by district school boards in accordance with sections 1001.42, 1003.57 and 1003.573, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, BEESS examines records and ESE services, evaluates procedures, provides information and assistance to school districts and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. The monitoring system is designed to facilitate improved educational outcomes for students while ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

Under 34 CFR §300.646(b)(2), if a state identifies significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity in a local educational agency (LEA) with respect to the identification of children as children with disabilities, the identification of children in specific disability categories, the placement of children with disabilities in particular educational settings or the taking of disciplinary actions, the LEA must use the maximum amount (15 percent) of funds allowable for comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (CEIS) for children in the LEA, particularly, but not exclusively, for children in those groups that were significantly overidentified.

Section 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities, was created in July 2010, and established documentation, reporting and monitoring requirements for districts regarding the use of restraint and seclusion for students with disabilities. School districts were required to have policies and procedures that govern parent notification, incident reporting, data collection and monitoring of the use of restraint or seclusion for students with disabilities in place no later than January 31, 2011. In July 2011, s. 1003.573, F.S., was amended to require that the FDOE establish standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual or physical restraint and occurrences of seclusion. In September and October 2011, the standards established by the FDOE were provided to school districts and were included in the district's Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures (SP&P) document.

ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process

Background Information

The 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for CEIS and the following indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities:

- Indicator 1 – Graduation: Percentage of youth with individual educational plans (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma.
- Indicator 2 – Dropout: Percentage of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.
- Indicator 4 – Rates of suspension and expulsion:
 - A. Percentage of districts that have a significant discrepancy in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs.
 - B. Percentage of districts that have (a) a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days for children with IEPs; and (b) policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and support and procedural safeguards.
- Indicator 5 – Educational environments:
 - Percentage of children with IEPs ages 6 through 21:
 - A. Inside the regular class 80 percent or more of the day;
 - B. Inside the regular class less than 40 percent of the day; and
 - C. In separate schools, residential facilities or homebound or hospital placements.
- Indicator 10 – Disproportionality, specific disability categories: Percentage of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.
- CEIS – Services provided to students in kindergarten through grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through grade three) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment.
- Restraint – Rate of incidents of restraint, as reported in the FDOE website.
- Seclusion – Rate of incidents of seclusion, as reported in the FDOE website.

The 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process includes four phases:

- Phase 1 was composed of planning activities that occurred in advance of the first on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 was the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST).
- Phase 3 includes follow-up and post-initial visit activities that are conducted by a designated follow-up team, as determined by the SST, and identification of the ongoing data that will be collected.
- Phase 4 includes evaluation of the effectiveness of the school district's action plan, and should include participation of the comprehensive team that was involved in Phase 1.

For ESE compliance monitoring purposes, the bureau required all school districts to participate in the 2013-14 Level I Fall Cycle Self-Assessment process, which included the review of records for implementation of IEPs and a review of incidents of restraint and seclusion. School districts

identified as part of the monitoring and assistance process with on-site visits during the 2013-14 school year were exempt from self-assessing school records for IEP implementation and restraint and seclusion. Instead, bureau members of the school district's SST reviewed a sample of records as part of the on-site visit.

In a letter dated August 27, 2013, the superintendent of the Alachua County School District was informed that the bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: discipline and least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with disabilities.

School Selection

Upon review of the school district's data reported via the FDOE's web-based reporting systems for suspension and expulsion and LRE, it was determined that the monitoring and assistance process would involve the following schools:

- Lincoln Middle School
- Gainesville High School

On-Site Activities

SST – On-Site Visit Team

The following SST members planned or conducted the monitoring and assistance on-site visit:

FDOE, BEESS

- Patricia Howell, program director (facilitator)
- Leanne Grillot, program specialist (co-facilitator)

FDOE, Bureau Discretionary Projects

- Stephanie Martinez, research and evaluation coordinator, Florida's Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Project (action-planning and problem-solving facilitator)
- M.J. Ziemba, facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN), North
- Paige Mace, project manager, Region 3B, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Chris Bond, Ed.D., central regional facilitator, Technical Assistance and Training Systems for Programs Serving Young Children with Disabilities (TATS)
- Pam Connolly, coordinator, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Associate Centers (FDLRS), Springs Service area
- Gary Percy, technology coordinator, Technology and Learning Connections (TLC), (Region 2)

Data Collection

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Student focus groups and interviews – 10 participants
- Completion of Restraint and Seclusion protocol – five students
- Completion of IEP Implementation protocol – five students
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – 14 participants
- Review of data from the school district's LEA Profiles, Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment and data compiled from district data systems

Review of Records

The school district was asked to provide the following documents, as applicable, for each of the 10 students selected for review of restraint and seclusion or IEP implementation. Additional specific IEP development and secondary transition standards were reviewed based upon the records reviews for IEP implementation.

- IEPs for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years
- Current functional behavioral assessment (FBA)
- Current behavioral intervention plans (BIP)
- Discipline and attendance records for 2013-14 school year
- Progress reports and report cards for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years
- Students' current schedule
- Parent notifications and other documentation related to incidents of restraint and seclusion
- Verification of training for staff members involved in incidents of restraint or seclusion
- Verification of the provision of related services and accommodations (e.g., lesson plans, teacher schedules and therapy logs)

Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

Prior to the on-site visit, the school district was provided with questions to use as a guide in the collection of data. SST and district staff reviewed these data during the action-planning and problem-solving process. Alachua County School District's questions were related to discipline and least restrictive environment. A list of these questions is located in Appendix A of this report.

Results

The following results reflect the data collected and reviewed through the activities of the 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process for Alachua County School District. Also included are commendations, findings of noncompliance, corrective actions and next steps, as applicable.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

To the maximum extent appropriate students with disabilities are to be educated with students who are nondisabled. Regular class placement is defined as a student's participation inside the regular classroom 80 percent or more of the day. Resource class placement is defined as participation in the regular class 40 percent through 79 percent of the day. The 2014 LEA Profile reports the district percentages for regular and resource placement which are not in line with the state average and the district's enrollment group.

- Data from the 2012-13 school year reported that 36.5 percent of the students with disabilities at Lincoln Middle School and 76.4 percent of the students with disabilities at Gainesville High School were served in regular class placement. The district's average for the 2012-13 school year was 61 percent, and the state average was 71 percent.

- The chart below shows that the district's rate for regular class placement has decreased from the 2011-12 school year.

Regular Class			
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Alachua	66%	61%	61%
Enrollment Group	73%	73%	73%
State	69%	71%	71%
<i>Source: *2014 LEA Profile - FDOE</i>			

During the problem-solving session, the team reviewed the district's data for 2012-13 school year regarding placement which reported that 61 percent of students with disabilities were served in regular class placement. Data specific to grade levels was not available at that time. However, the district indicated that while some elementary schools appeared to fully include almost all students, other elementary schools minimally included students with disabilities. Only one middle school met the state rate for regular class placement that year, but each of the high schools met or was very close to the 71 percent state rate.

The district provided a copy of the Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) assessment completed in June 2010, stating that the improvement strategies selected during the BPIE process have been implemented in the district since that time. The BPIE is an internal assessment process designed to facilitate the analysis, implementation and improvement of inclusive educational practices. The district indicated plans to complete the BPIE again in April 2015.

The annual objectives from the June 2010 BPIE for the district included the following:

- By the end of 2012, district-level personnel (including school-based administrators) will be part of a collaborative education system leading to the effective instruction of all students (including all students with disabilities) in general education and natural contexts. The number of schools participating in and then writing action plans will increase from the current number by at least two each year. Compare attitudes and beliefs of participants by completing a post-survey.
- The district will improve the communication and increase the dissemination of professional development opportunities to target populations of parents, school and district-based administrators, paraprofessionals, teachers (all), and other staff as evidenced by year-end survey data.
- Hiring procedures will ensure that an applicant is knowledgeable in best practices for inclusive services for all students with disabilities.
- District-level personnel will proactively facilitate and monitor the smooth articulation of students with disabilities from grade to grade or school to school.
- The participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities (clubs, athletics, etc.) will increase. The number of students participating at the beginning, middle and end of the school year will be measured.
- A formalized peer support network in Alachua County will be established, which will be evaluated by the number of schools, teachers and students participating.

District responses for LRE on the guiding questions document included the following regarding which schools were contributing to the LRE concerns:

- A focus for the district was to increase the percentage of students with disabilities in regular class placements to 70 percent.
- A sampling of elementary schools for the 2013-14 school year indicated that four schools were close to or above the 70 percent target. Four other elementary schools had less than 50 percent of their students with disabilities in regular class placements.
- None of the middle schools were meeting the 70 percent target for regular class placement.
- Each of the high schools was “at or very close to” the target of 70 percent except for one combination junior and senior high school which had 66 percent of its students with disabilities in regular class placements.
- The special day school placements were planned to be addressed through school restructuring the following year, and that could increase special class placement (students with IEPs who spend less than 40 percent of their school day with nondisabled peers).

District responses for LRE on the guiding questions document included the following regarding how school-level evidence-based practices related to LRE are being supported by the district:

- Inclusion specialists design, implement and deliver professional development to impact teacher, paraprofessional and administrator professional growth.
- Direct support has been provided to parents and teachers of students with disabilities in the following areas: curriculum, behavior, accommodations and modifications, collaboration with teachers, curriculum planning, and model class instruction.
- District staff has been supporting administrators with school-based needs of students with disabilities and collaborating with agencies that deliver support for students with disabilities.
- District-level personnel (including school based administrators) continue to be a part of a collaborative education system leading to the effective instruction of all students (including all students with disabilities) in general education and natural settings.

Regarding which grades within each school were contributing to the LRE concerns, the district noted that at the time the guiding questions document was completed, no pattern had been determined pertaining to specific grade levels. In addition, strategies, initiatives and resources identified in the District Improvement and Assistance Plan (DIAP) for students with disabilities, were included in all targeted initiatives of the DIAP.

Regarding priorities to be targeted to improve the district’s LRE, the following were discussed:

- Increase certification in general education subject areas
- Increase LRE options at the prekindergarten level
- Eliminate one special day school
- Increase number of general education teachers with ESE certification
- Implement process for school-based BPIE

The district indicated during the problem-solving session that there had been an increase in regular class and resource room (students with IEPs who spend 40 percent to 79 percent of their school day with nondisabled peers) placements with the changes in course requirements for standard diploma and the corresponding course code changes.

Discipline (Suspensions and Expulsions)

Discipline rates for students with disabilities and nondisabled students are calculated by dividing the number of students who received out-of-school suspensions (OSS) or expulsions totaling more than 10 days by total-year enrollment as reported at the end of the school year (survey 5). The risk ratio is calculated by dividing the discipline rate of students with disabilities by the discipline rate of nondisabled students. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that students with disabilities and nondisabled students are equally likely to be suspended or expelled.

Discipline risk ratios by racial or ethnic group are calculated for students with disabilities by dividing the discipline rate of a specific racial or ethnic group by the rate of all nondisabled students. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that, for instance, black students with disabilities are equally likely to be suspended or expelled as all nondisabled students.

Based on the district's 2014 LEA profile, 2012-13 data for Indicators 4A and 4B included the following:

- Fourteen percent of the district's student population was identified as disabled.
- Thirty-six percent of all students enrolled in the district were black; 45 percent were white; district enrollment in other racial or ethnic membership groups was less than 10 percent for each group.
- Forty-nine percent of the district's students with disabilities were black and 37 percent were white.
- Sixty-four percent of the district's students identified with an emotional or behavioral disability were black and 28 percent were white.
- The district's discipline risk ratio for the 2013-14 school year was 2.84 (SPP 4A).
- The district's risk ratio by race or ethnicity for black students was 4.83 (SPP 4B).

Discipline Risk Ratios by Race or Ethnicity				
Race	2011-12 School Year*		2012-13 School Year**	
	State	Alachua	State	Alachua
White	0.80	1.03	0.74	
Black	2.67	5.48	2.49	4.83
Hispanic	1.01		0.76	
Asian				
American Indian and Alaskan Native	1.03		1.27	
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Island			*	
Two or more races	1.34		1.29	

Blank cells indicate that there are fewer than 10 students with disabilities for a specific race or ethnic group suspended or expelled for greater than 10 days.
Source: 2013 LEA Profile; 2014 LEA Profile - FDOE

The district identified their most current data related to these discipline indicators as follows:

- The district identified seven schools that included middle and high schools with the highest risk ratios for SPP indicators 4A and 4B, including the grade levels with the highest frequency (grades six, seven and nine).
 - Middle schools were identified as having the highest percentage of students suspended.
 - High school students with disabilities received more days of suspension than their nondisabled peers.
 - Monitoring of results indicated that black males from lower socio-economic status families who received ESE services were the most likely to be suspended for disciplinary infractions and have continued to be disproportionately suspended.

District responses for discipline on the guiding questions document included the following:

- Regarding evidence-based practices currently planned for use or implementation at the school level
 - Discipline data is regularly reviewed and shared among school administrators.
 - Discipline reports, suspension data and suspension letters are reviewed by the executive director for ESE and Student Services, supervisors and a district-level teacher-on-special-assignment.
 - Reports submitted to deans and behavior resource teachers (BRT) and reviewed by ESE staff.
 - District support staff meet quarterly with deans to discuss ways and means to reduce suspensions, especially for students with disabilities. Other options are discussed and shared to reduce the number of suspension days for specific incidents.
 - Schools that suspend a student must immediately forward a copy of the OSS notice to the executive director of ESE and Student Services; principals are required to sign the notice to the parent rather than a dean or assistant principal.
- Regarding strategies, initiatives and resources identified in the DIAP to achieve discipline targets for students with disabilities, the district noted that students with disabilities were included in all targeted initiatives of DIAP.
- Regarding how school-level evidence-based practices are being supported by the school district
 - District student services and ESE staff hold monthly meetings with secondary school deans, elementary BRTs and school counselors. Discipline and suspension trends are routinely discussed at these meetings. PBS plans are reviewed and revised based on results. Training on specific topics related to school discipline is provided periodically to these groups.
 - Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are included in district policies, SP&P, notice of procedural safeguards and Code of Student Conduct, which are posted on the school board website.
 - Information packets and forms that have been developed by district staff are provided to school personnel to facilitate compliance with procedures for review of behavior strategies on IEPs, review of student placements by the IEP teams and compilation of information to be considered for changes of placement.
 - Publications and website resources are made available to school personnel for reference for developing IEPs to address specific behavior concerns.
 - PBS information is disseminated from the district office through a monthly newsletter with information for schools to incorporate into the school's newsletter.
 - An editable brochure is provided to schools to customize for needs unique to that school.
 - The regional PBS website provides valuable information on the PBS model and its

benefits. Both teachers and parents can access this site.

The district's SP&P document that was in effect at the time of the on-site visit included the following information relating to discipline of students with disabilities:

- District behavior support staff meet regularly with school-based deans, counselors, behavior resource teachers and administrators to provide ongoing assistance, training, direction and monitoring on classroom and individual behavior management strategies. Training and information includes school-wide strategic planning to reduce disciplinary referrals, classroom management, counseling programs, social curriculum programs, reward systems, individual behavior point systems, and more intense FBAs and individual BIPs. Computer-assisted supports, such as BIPs, are also shared.
- PBS models for school-wide strategic planning and individual behavior supports are utilized in several ongoing and progressive levels of implementation at schools at different levels of implementation of the model, dependent upon the planning year for the school with the PBS model. The district participates in Florida's PBS Response to Intervention (RtI) Project for tiered levels of support to students, data-based decision making and strategic team planning to prevent disciplinary problems at schools, teach effective school behaviors, provide effective consequences and preventative measures, reduce out-of-school removals and increase student achievement. The district PBS/RtI leadership team maintains three-year goals and revises goals annually.
- Based on the present levels of performance and the impact of the disability on progress in the general education setting, both behaviorally and academically, the IEP team determines if social or behavioral issues are an area of concern. If so, a goal is developed to address the behaviors that are of primary concern. Strategies are then determined by the IEP team and may range in intensity from minimal accommodations to an intense BIP that is based on a functional assessment. The strategies may be included in the IEP as accommodations, special education services, related services, consultation or direct instruction and address the goals directly. Progress is monitored through the evaluation plan for the goal as designated in the IEP or through the measures delineated in a BIP.
- Regarding staff training for conducting FBAs and developing and implementing BIPs, qualified staff, psychologists and behavior analysts conduct training for teachers and support staff throughout the school year, as requested by school personnel and as scheduled through periodic district training. A variety of formats have been designed, compiled and made available district-wide to provide guidance and structure for teachers and support staff to utilize when gathering data for functional assessments and the resulting BIPs. Commercial programs and formats for BIPs are also made available as additional options for schools to utilize. A district-certified behavior analyst assists schools with oversight of functional assessments and ongoing BIPs, focusing on teacher and staff training and the more complex cases of low-incidence disabilities.

Student Focus Groups

Student focus groups were conducted at the middle school and the high school during the monitoring and assistance on-site visit. Student views were collected on the following topics: IEP team meetings, inclusion and class work, academics, extracurricular activities, and suspension and expulsion.

- All of the students in both focus groups indicated that they have participated in the IEP process and were aware of their own IEP team meetings.
- Although some students reported that ESE students are treated differently at school, by far most students indicated that they were treated the same and had the same opportunities to

participate in extracurricular activities as all students. The middle school students who indicated being treated differently often referred to restricted access on campus and restricted courses they could take.

- Students shared that there were teacher websites that students and parents could access from home.
- Two high school students indicated that the intensive reading course was too easy.
- Students from both focus groups stated that they would like to be able to use the computers in their classroom more often.
- The high school students stated interest in more career electives, such as nursing.
- Students in both focus groups presented a clear understanding of what kinds of behaviors trigger disciplinary actions, and described these behaviors as fighting, cursing and hitting.
- Both groups indicated that dress code violations could result in a student's assignment to in-school detention.

Commendations

1. The district's 2014 LEA Profile included the following:
 - Federal Uniform High School Graduation Rate for students with disabilities of 54 percent (based on 2012-13 data), which was higher than the state rate (52 percent) and the rate of the district's enrollment group (52 percent)
 - Standard Diploma Graduation Rate for students with disabilities of 64 percent (based on 2012-13 data), which was higher than the state rate (58 percent) and the rate of the district's enrollment group (58 percent)
 - Postschool Outcome Data was higher for students with disabilities in higher education (37 percent for the district, compared to 28 percent for the district's enrollment group and 27 percent for the state rate), in higher education or competitively employed (46 percent for the district, compared to 40 percent for the district's enrollment group and 38 percent for the state rate) and in any employment or continuing education (56 percent for the district, compared to 52 percent for the district's enrollment group and 50 percent for the state rate)
2. One of the district's schools (Newberry Elementary) won a national award for inclusive schools.

ESE Monitoring and Compliance

Records Review

Bureau staff identified noncompliance in the records of seven of the 10 students whose records were reviewed. Standards from the IEP Development, IEP Implementation, Secondary Transition and Restraint and Seclusion protocols were reviewed.

Findings of Noncompliance

Bureau staff members identified 19 incidents of noncompliance on a total of seven standards. Identifying information regarding the seven students reflecting the findings of noncompliance was provided to the Alachua County School District prior to the dissemination of this report.

Standard for Identified Noncompliance	Number of Incidents and Students
<p>RS-1: The parent or guardian was provided with same-day notification in writing of any incident of restraint or seclusion before the end of the school day on which the restraint or seclusion occurred. The notification included the type of restraint used and any injuries occurring during or resulting from the restraint or seclusion. (s.1003.573(1)(c), F.S.)</p>	<p>Six incidents for five students.</p>
<p>RS-3: The school has documentation of the parent's or guardian's signed acknowledgement of the same-day written notification or a minimum of two attempts to obtain written acknowledgement when the parent or guardian failed to respond to the initial same-day written notification. (s. 1003.573(1)(d), F.S.)</p>	<p>Six incidents involving five students</p>
<p>Transition (T) 16-9: There are measurable postsecondary goals in the designated areas (i.e., education, training, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills). (34 CFR §300.320(b)(1); Rule 6A-6.03028(3)(h)10a, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)</p>	<p>Two findings involving two students</p>
<p>T16-11: The IEP includes measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals that are related to the student's transition service needs. The annual goals should be designed to meet the student's needs that result from the disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum, and also to meet the student's other needs that result from the disability. Benchmarks or short-term objectives must be included for students with disabilities who take alternate assessments, aligned to alternate achievement standards, or any other student with a disability as determined by the IEP team. (34 CFR §300.320(a)(2); Rule 6A-6.03028(3)(h)2-3, F.A.C.)</p>	<p>One finding involving one student</p>
<p>T16-16: The IEP includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon: an age-appropriate transition assessment; transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals; and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition services needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority. (34 CFR §§300.320(b)-(c) and 300.321(b); Rule 6A-6.03028(3)(b)-(c) and (h), F.A.C.)</p>	<p>Two findings involving two students</p>
<p>IEP-13: The IEP includes measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the student's needs that result from the disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education</p>	<p>One finding involving one student</p>

Standard for Identified Noncompliance	Number of Incidents and Students
curriculum and meet the student's other needs that result from the disability. Benchmarks or short-term objectives should be included for students with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards, or any other student with a disability as determined by the IEP team. (34 CFR §300.320(a)(2))	
IEP Implementation (IPI)-3: There is evidence of the provision of special education services or specially designed instruction as specified on the IEP. (Rule 6A-6.03028(3)(h), F.A.C.)	One finding involving one student

Corrective Actions

The district provided evidence of student-specific correction of the noncompliance related to measurable postsecondary goals with IEP amendments dated June 4, 2014. In a June 25, 2014, letter to the Alachua County School District providing student-specific information, the bureau required that, no later than September 15, 2014, the district must provide evidence of completion of the required individual corrective actions as follows:

For the noncompliance related to an IEP, the district had to reconvene the student's IEP to make the annual goal(s) measurable. With agreement of the parent, the IEP could be amended outside an IEP team meeting, making sure to inform the student's IEP team of the changes and, upon request, providing the parent with a revised copy of the IEP with the amendments incorporated.

For the noncompliance related to IEP implementation, the district had to reconvene the student's IEP team to determine the amount of compensatory services (including the location, frequency and duration of the services) that were needed due to the district's failure to provide home instruction. In addition, the district was required to show documentation for all compensatory services that were provided.

For the noncompliance related to the documentation and reporting of incidents of restraint and seclusion, the district had to identify the policy, procedure or practice that caused the noncompliance and provide evidence of the action taken to ensure future compliance.

Documentation verifying completion of all student-specific noncompliance has been received and reviewed by BEESS staff prior to the completion of this report.

In addition, no later than one year from the date of the student-specific corrective action letter (**June 25, 2015**), the district must demonstrate correct implementation of the standards identified as noncompliant by providing a sample of records that demonstrates 100 percent compliance for each of these standards. Documentation of the completion of all components of the corrective action must be received in accordance with the timelines established above, but in no case longer than one year from the date of formal identification (**June 25, 2015**).

Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps

As part of the monitoring and assistance on-site visit, the SST members, ESE director and representatives from the Alachua County School District participated in an action-planning and problem-solving process. The group reviewed the data collected prior to and during the on-site visit and developed a list of priorities and obstacles. An action plan was developed to address the first priority selected, which was related to keeping all students, including students with disabilities, in school and engaged to be prepared for college and career readiness.

The school district's action plan included the following:

Priority Goal: Reduce the number of OSS by 10 percent for non-level 1 and 2 offenses for all students with a specific focus on students with disabilities and black males by July 1, 2015.

Measured by:

- A review of the number of incidents of OSS by incident type, and a comparison of level 1 and 2 offenses for OSS.
- An evaluation of the break down of suspension events between students with and without disabilities and black males by number and percent.

The barrier chosen to address was:

- Training (noting that, although they do not have control on all policies and procedures, there is leverage on some).

The plans developed to address the barrier of lack of training included the following:

- Develop a plan for professional development for administration for summer training.
- Have conversations with current superintendent and assist superintendent in curriculum and instruction.
- Contact discretionary project staff to determine what supports can be provided for summer administrative training.
- Check that the master in-service plan coding for professional development modules is correct.
- Work with administrators of targeted schools to identify their needs and then embed their needs into the professional development plans specifically targeting success for students with disabilities and black males.
- Create a committee or work group to work with community groups that can provide supports for black males and rebuild the parent advisory council.

The problem-solving team determined that the following would be used to progress monitor the above plans:

- Use reports generated by the district coupled with those from district data staff to determine the number of students, type of offense, number of events and type of consequence; and run reports every nine weeks.
- The PBS evaluation data review will be for fidelity of implementation.

The problem-solving team determined the following for evaluating the progress toward achievement of reducing the number of OSS events by 10 percent for non-level 1 and 2 offenses for all students with a specific focus on students with disabilities and black males by July 1, 2015:

- Evaluate the number of incidents of OSS by student type, and a comparison of level 1 and 2 offenses for OSS monthly

- Breakdown suspension events for students with disabilities and black males in general education by number and percent every nine weeks.

Updates on May 12, 2014, and August 29, 2014, between the problem-solving team leader and the district's ESE director:

- Professional development was scheduled for administrators for July 29, 30, and 31. Administrators were asked to submit topics on which they wanted more information. The ESE district staff was asked to identify areas that needed to be discussed in addition to discipline and LRE. The district's new superintendent was to begin July 1, and the ESE director was scheduled to meet with the superintendent on the 1st and again on the 15th.
- The majority of administrators attended this summer training and reviewed closely the district and school data. Many of the principals have engaged their staff as part of the follow up. During the district's 10-day count, the assistant and deputy superintendents evaluate the service delivery models at each school.
- The district's new superintendent requested that staff review existing data, obtain additional data, and analyze the data within the context of each school setting.

Next Steps	
Educational environment (LRE)	
Summary:	To the maximum extent appropriate students with disabilities are to be educated with students who are nondisabled. Based on 2013-14 school year data, the district's regular classroom placement of 61 percent is lower than the state average (71 percent) and the average of the district's enrollment group (73 percent), and has decreased or stayed the same for the last two years.
Required Action:	By February 2, 2015 , the school district shall inform the bureau regarding the status of its collaboration with the FIN. FIN provides learning opportunities, consultation, information and support to educators, families and community members resulting in the inclusion of all students. By February 2, 2015 , the district is to provide the bureau with an update on the progress due to implementation of the actions determined at the problem-solving sessions.
Discipline	
Summary:	Black students with disabilities in the district are 4.83 percent more likely to be suspended or expelled as compared to all nondisabled students.
Required Actions:	By February 2, 2015 , the school district shall inform the bureau regarding the status of the collaborations with each of the following discretionary projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district shall collaborate with PBS: Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) in order to build the school district's capacity to better assist schools to develop effective discipline, social skills teaching and behavior support strategies for all students. • The district shall continue to collaborate with SEDNET regarding

Next Steps	
	<p>facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and students with emotional or behavioral disabilities and their families.</p> <p>By February 2, 2015, the district is to provide the bureau with an update on the progress due to implementation of the actions determined at the problem-solving sessions.</p>
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process	
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional action-planning and problem solving for other priorities for the school district in regard to least restrictive environment and discipline will be scheduled by the SST liaison for the school district and the ESE director. • By March 30, 2015, the SST team, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan(s) and determine additional next steps, as appropriate.

Technical Assistance

1. **Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders** (Florida's PBS Project) may be accessed at http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/RTIB%20Guide%20101811_final.pdf and provides an overview of the critical components of an MTSS for behavior. These critical components describe systems changes that are necessary for a results-driven ESE system.
2. The district's **ESE Policies and Procedures** document provides district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual, physical or mechanical restraint and seclusion developed by the FDOE. The school district's document for the 2013-14 through 2015-16 school years may be accessed at <http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
3. The technical assistance paper entitled **Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Restraint and Seclusion with Students with Disabilities**, dated October 14, 2011, may be accessed at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-6212/dps-2011-165.pdf>. This document provides guidance regarding the use, documenting, reporting and monitoring of restraint and seclusion with students with disabilities in school districts, including (a) when restraint or seclusion might be used, (b) considerations when selecting a training program for restraint, (c) what should be documented, (d) parent notification and reporting, and (e) monitoring use. It also contains information about s. 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities.
4. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released **School Discipline Guidance** in the January 2014, Volume 4, Issue 1 of the **Office of Special Education Programs Monthly Update**. This package will assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. The resource documents listed below are included in the package, and are available at <http://www.ed.gov/school-discipline>:
 - **Dear Colleague** guidance letter on civil rights and discipline;
 - **Guiding Principles** document that draws from emerging research and best practices;
 - **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources** that indexes federal technical assistance and other resources; and
 - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations** that catalogue State laws and regulations related to school discipline.
5. According to s. 1003.57, F.S., once every three years, each school district and school shall complete a BPIE assessment with a FIN facilitator and include the results of the BPIE assessment and all planned short-term and long-term improvement efforts in the school district's SP&P. BPIE is an internal assessment process designed to facilitate the analysis, implementation and improvement of inclusive educational practices at the district and school team levels.

A FIN facilitator is available to assist the school district in scheduling and completing the BPIE, and based on the results, will identify how FIN can provide support to the school district (<http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/>).

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

**2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance
State Support Team for Alachua County School District**

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Appendix A

Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

Appendix A: Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

1. What are the most current data levels on each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
2. What is the gap between BEESS expected level(s) of targeted indicators and your district's current level(s) of targeted indicators?
3. Do data indicate equity issues related to the selected BEESS indicators? Are there subgroups for which the gap between expected and goal levels of performance and current levels of performance is more or less significant?
 - Gender
 - Race or ethnic group
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - Students with disabilities (by each sub-group)
 - English language learners
 - Comparison within and across above sub-groups
4. Disaggregate district-level indicator data to school levels. Which schools are contributing to total district frequency for each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
5. Disaggregate school-level indicator data by grade level. Which grades within each school are contributing to total school frequency for each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
6. Disaggregate between type of school (elementary, middle school and high school) and by student outcomes.
7. What evidence-based practices are currently planned for use or implementation at the school level?
8. Are the expected evidence-based practices occurring sufficiently?
9. If expected evidence-based practices are not occurring or not occurring sufficiently, why not? (What are some potential barriers specific to targeted BEESS indicators at the school level?)
10. How are school-level evidence-based practices being supported by the district specific to BEESS indicators being targeted for improvement?
11. Are district supports for school-level practices being provided sufficiently?
12. If district supports are not occurring or not occurring sufficiently, why not? (What are some potential barriers specific to targeted BEESS indicators at the district level?)
13. What strategies, initiatives and resources have been identified in the District Improvement and Assistance Plan (DIAP) with regard to achieving annual measurable outcomes targets for students with disabilities?
14. As applicable, has the mid-year reflection based on mid-year assessment data been completed, and what, if any, adjustments have been made to the DIAP with regard to strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities?
15. What does the ESE Policies and Procedures document reflect with regard to the district's goal to improve targeted indicator performance? Did the district achieve the goal set during the prior year?
16. What is occurring with regard to implementing the strategies in the ESE Policies and Procedures document with regard to targeted indicator performance?
17. Based on all of the above answers, what priorities will be targeted to improve BEESS targeted indicators?

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

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following is a list of acronyms, abbreviations and terms used within this report.

BEESS	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BIP	Behavioral intervention plan
BPIE	Best Practices for Inclusive Education
BRIC	BEESS Resource and Information Center
BRT	Behavior resource teachers
CEIS	Coordinated early intervening services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DIAP	District Improvement and Assistance Plan
ESE	Exceptional student education
F.A.C.	Florida Administrative Code
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
LEA	Local educational agency
LRE	Least restrictive environment
MTSS	Multi-tiered system of support
OSS	Out-of-school suspension
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PBS/MTSS	Positive Behavior Support/Multi-tiered System of Supports
PS/Rtl	Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention
Rtl	Response to intervention
SEDNET	Multiagency for Student with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities
SP&P	Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures
SPP	State Performance Plan
SST	State Support Team
TATS	Technical Assistance and Training System for Programs Serving Young Children with Disabilities
TLC	Technology and Learning Connections



Pam Stewart, Commissioner

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