

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

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**Gadsden County School District  
October 22-23, 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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November 17, 2014

Reginald C. James, Superintendent  
Gadsden County School District  
35 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Quincy, Florida 32351-4400

Dear Superintendent James:

We are pleased to provide you with the **2013-14 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Gadsden 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 October 22-23, 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' (BEES) 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 Gadsden County School District was selected for an on-site visit due to graduation rate, dropout rate and least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. The on-site visit was conducted by a state support team (SST) that included BEES and discretionary project staff.

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

Superintendent James  
November 17, 2014  
Page Two

Ms. Sharon Thomas, ESE 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 preparation for college and career readiness. 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 Gadsden 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](mailto:monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,

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

Enclosure

cc: Sharon Thomas  
Mary Jane Tappen  
Cathy Bishop  
Liz Conn

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

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**2013-14 Exceptional Student Education  
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**Gadsden County School District**

**October 22-23, 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, the bureau monitors ESE programs provided by district school boards in accordance with ss. 1001.42, 1003.57 and 1003.573, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the bureau 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 BEESS 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 Gadsden County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: graduation rate, dropout rate and least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with disabilities.

### **School Selection**

Upon review of the school district's data, it was determined that the monitoring and assistance process would involve the following schools and programs for record reviews, school-level administrator interviews or on-site visits:

- East Gadsden High School
- West Gadsden High School
- Carter Parramore Academy

### **On-Site Activities**

#### **SST – On-Site Visit Team**

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

#### **FDOE, BEESS**

- Judy White, transition specialist ( co-facilitator)
- Liz Conn, program director (co-facilitator)
- Jayna Jenkins, multi-tiered system of supports and Response to Intervention (MTSS/Rtl) consultant, Student Support Services (action-planning and problem-solving co-facilitator)

#### **FDOE Office of Differentiated Accountability (DA)**

- Anne Selland, school improvement specialist, Region I, DA, University of South Florida (USF) Problem Solving and Rtl (PS/Rtl)

#### **FDOE, Bureau of Federal Education Programs**

- Sonya Morris, bureau chief

#### **FDOE/BEESS Discretionary Projects**

- Beth Hardcastle, regional coordinator, Florida PS/Rtl Project
- Amber Brundage, post-doctoral research scholar, Florida PS/Rtl Project
- Lori Garcia, director, Project 10 Transition Education Network
- MJ Ziemba, facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
- Catie McRae, director, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) (Miccosukee)

## **Data Collection**

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Student focus groups and interviews – 12 participants
- Completion of individual educational plan (IEP) Implementation protocol – two students
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – 26 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 two students selected for review of graduation rate, dropout rate and LRE for students with disabilities:

- IEPs for the 2012-13 and the 2013-14 school years
- Discipline and attendance records for 2013-14 school year
- Progress reports and report cards for the 2012-13 and the 2013-14 school years
- Student's current schedule
- Documentation for IEP implementation (e.g., lesson plans, student work, teacher narratives, provider logs, interviews, progress reports, meeting notes)

## **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. Gadsden County School District's questions were related to graduation rate, dropout rate and LRE for students with disabilities. A list of these questions is located in Appendix A of this report.

## **Results**

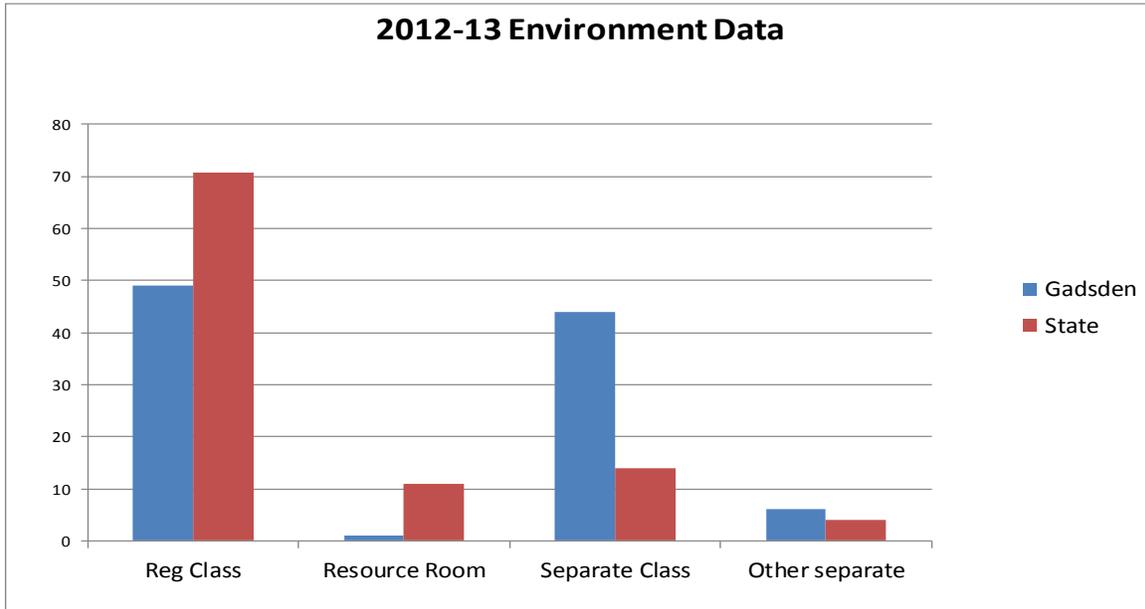
The following results reflect the data collected and reviewed through the activities of the 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process for Gadsden County School District. Also included are commendations, findings of noncompliance and next steps, as applicable.

Size-alike comparisons are made with data from the enrollment group classified as small: Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, DeSoto, Dixie, Franklin, Gilchrist, Glades, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lake Wales Charter, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Okeechobee, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Wakulla and Washington.

## LRE, Graduation and Dropout Rate

### Data Review

#### LRE



Source: 2013 LEA Profile

#### Regular Class Enrollment

|                  | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Gadsden          | 62%     | 63%     | 59%     | 49%     | 65%     |
| Enrollment Group | 70%     | 72%     | 72%     | 72%     | 72%     |
| State            | 67%     | 69%     | 68%     | 71%     | 71%     |

Source: 2013 and 2014 LEA Profiles

#### Separate Class Enrollment

|                  | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Gadsden          | 28%     | 30%     | 34%     | 44%     | 30%     |
| Enrollment Group | 16%     | 16%     | 15%     | 15%     | 16%     |
| State            | 16%     | 15%     | 15%     | 14%     | 15%     |

Source: 2013 and 2014 LEA Profiles

| County           | Enrolled in Early Childhood Class w/Majority of Sp Ed Services <u>Inside</u> Class |       |       | Enrolled in Early Childhood Class w/Majority of Sp Ed Services <u>Outside</u> Class |       |       | Combined Enrolled in Early Childhood Settings | Separate Class, School, Facility |       |       | Home or Outpatient Services |       |       |
|------------------|--|-------|-------|---|-------|-------|---|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|
|                  | 2010-11  | 11-12 | 12-13 | 2010-11   | 11-12 | 12-13 |   | 2010-11                          | 11-12 | 12-13 | 2010-11                     | 11-12 | 12-13 |
| Gadsden          | 37%  | 21%   | 23%   | 10%   | 23%   | 11%   | 34%   | 54%                              | 55%   | 64%   | <1%                         | <1%   | 2%    |
| State of Florida | 35%  | 30%   | 27%   | 15%   | 17%   | 17%   | 44%   | 45%                              | 49%   | 51%   | 5%                          | 4%    | 4%    |

Source: LEA Profile (multiple years)

### Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities

|                  | 2009–10 | 2010–11 | 2011–12 | 2012–13 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Gadsden          | 4%      | 6%      | 7%      | 7%      |
| Enrollment Group | 5%      | 4%      | 4%      | 4%      |
| State            | 4%      | 4%      | 3%      | 4%      |

### Dropout Rate for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBD)

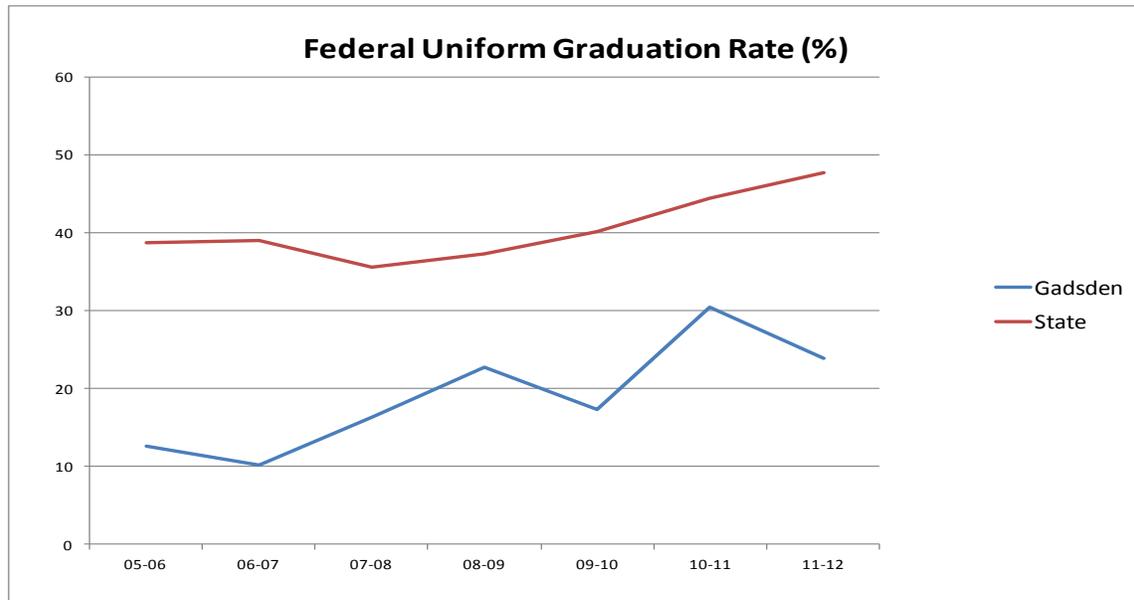
|                  | 2009–10 | 2010–11 | 2011–12 | 2012–13 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Gadsden          | 7%      | 4%      | 4%      | 7%      |
| Enrollment Group | 5%      | 5%      | 6%      | 5%      |
| State            | 6%      | 7%      | 7%      | 7%      |

### Dropout Rate for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)

|                  | 2009–10 | 2010–11 | 2011–12 | 2012–13 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Gadsden          | 3%      | 8%      | 11%     | 8%      |
| Enrollment Group | 5%      | 4%      | 5%      | 5%      |
| State            | 4%      | 4%      | 3%      | 4%      |

Source: 2012 and 2013 LEA profiles

### Graduation Rate of Students with Disabilities



Source: Gadsden County School District, ESE Department

|                  | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Gadsden          | 30%     | 24%     | 40%     |
| Enrollment Group | 44%     | 46%     | 49%     |
| State            | 44%     | 48%     | 52%     |

Source: 2013 LEA Profile

In addition to the data above, the district problem-solving team reviewed reported information and discussed the following:

- The district offers professional development regarding differentiated instruction, but it may be that these classes need to be more intensive and offered to smaller groups.

- Due to school counselors' scheduling and testing responsibilities, they have less time to assist students with college information.
- The current data system is a barrier to accessing data for measurement and disaggregation purposes. Grade point average (GPA) and attendance are indicators of at-risk students and these data need to be tracked. It is not clear how attendance is being measured. During the 2014-15 school year, the district will be using Skyward as their data system. The district needs to clarify what constitutes an absence for one day. Skyward could be developed to track that information. This will require assistance from the management information systems (MIS) department. Staff at East Gadsden High School maintain and monitor a data wall. This could be a great resource for building the infrastructure for tracking students. At West Gadsden High School, every senior is on a clip board and monitored for being on track for graduation. It was recommended that the two high school principals share their processes.
- Some students have been retained twice before being promoted to middle school.
- Gadsden uses the Odyssey Recovery Program for credit recovery. School counselors are responsible for enrolling students in Odyssey. The special education consultation teacher meets with the students and tracks their grades, and can talk to counselors about enrolling students in Odyssey. If a student fails a course in Odyssey, the student is automatically reenrolled in the course.
- Middle school students need more access to credit recovery programs. Some are already far behind by high school. Some middle schools that are working with DA, the statewide program to support failing schools, have a class for students who use Odyssey to catch up. With DA support, the district can extend this intervention to other grades.
- Eighth graders are being informed of their diploma options. Students with transition IEPs are being encouraged to look at careers versus jobs. They are being informally assessed through inventories for the purpose of considering post-school outcomes and self-determination needs.

The following is a summary of the discussion regarding establishing priorities for drop-out prevention support.

- Proactive measures need to be taken before students reach high school. If supports were put in place for ninth graders, there would be less failure. Twelfth graders are a priority for support because of the immediacy of their approaching graduation.
- Indicators of drop-out factors have been identified. Ninth grade can be the "make or break year." Addressing ninth and twelfth graders could have a more immediate effect on drop-out prevention. There has been a proposal for high schools to use graduation coaches.
- East Gadsden sponsors a summer program for eighth graders to help with the transition to high school. Students receive half a credit for attending the program.
- Early warning data would be useful to see which elementary students need additional support. This would result in the development of an effective tiered system.
- Drop-out prevention could be a tiered system. Prevention, intervention and extreme need could define three tiers. The resources that are currently available need to be identified.
- If the initiative focused on a cohort of at-risk eighth graders, proactive measures would be part of the initiative as the students transition to high school.

## **Student Focus Groups**

Student focus groups were conducted with two groups of high school students during the monitoring and assistance on-site visit. One group consisted of six students who had IEPs. The other group consisted of six general education students. Student views were collected on the following topics: career and technical education, academics, extracurricular activities, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) 2.0, diploma options, dropout, suspension and expulsion and resources and services needed. In addition, for the group of students who were receiving ESE services, views were collected on IEP team meetings and parental participation.

Four of the students with IEPs were pursuing a standard diploma, and two of the students were pursuing a special diploma. Four students anticipated attending college. They felt that their schools were preparing them for college. All six students could explain what an IEP team meeting is. Three of the students had attended their IEP team meetings within the last year. All had some type of work experience. It was agreed that the schools helped students find jobs. However, they felt that the vocational courses were too basic, and they would like to see more technology classes offered. The students indicated that some teachers were better at helping them prepare for the FCAT, and that, when there had been help for FCAT after school, they had performed better. One student had just learned of the FCAT waiver. One student had just learned that rights transfer to students at the age of 18. When asked if they felt that they were treated differently at school because they took special education courses, the answer was that there were students who felt superior and that bullying is a barrier to being in school. Additionally, some general education students considered it unfair to allow accommodations to students with disabilities. All six students knew someone who had dropped out. Some had earned General Education Development diplomas. One student was considering dropping out, but was making an effort to stay in school. All six students knew adults at school that they could talk to. One special diploma student has had a lot of support and success, but is not sure about staying in school until the age of 22.

The general education students were advanced placement (AP) students or dually enrolled. One student was in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and Upward Bound programs. They indicated that it is not “cool” to be smart. They did not think that students with disabilities are treated differently. They felt that guidance counselors are too overworked to assist with students as needed. West Gadsden has two guidance counselors. East Gadsden has three. They did not feel that discipline is applied equally to the athletes. Additionally, it was possible to get suspended for up to five days for a dress code violation. The consequence for tardiness was a full day in in-school suspension, during which work didn’t get completed. They felt that students should choose whether to take FCAT on computer or pencil and paper. They indicated that teachers start teaching FCAT material in February. They indicated that they weren’t always tested on what they had learned in class. FCAT instruction for retakes is only given in the summer, and most students don’t want to go to school in the summer. The students indicated that there were not enough computers.

## **Teacher Focus Group**

The teacher focus group was comprised of general education and ESE teachers. The teachers placed an emphasis on the importance of relationships with students. They indicated that school-wide behavior support helps with the environment and expectations. General education teachers rarely go to IEP team meetings but do share written information prior to them, and they sign the IEPs. They get the goals and accommodation page of the IEPs. They did not feel that

there is much ESE support in the classroom, nor did they perceive that the ESE teachers were a part of the classroom. General education and ESE teachers have little communication. There is a lack of professional development related to working with ESE students. In general, the resource teacher checked in with teachers regarding students. Other than that, general education teachers felt full responsibility for the students, including developing strategies. Some teachers indicated that they have no current text or materials. Self-contained classrooms do not have curriculum materials. The teachers supplement what they have with materials they find on the Internet. One teacher said that a barrier to getting help with ESE students is a lack of money.

## **Commendations**

1. The percentage of students with disabilities who have graduated with a four-year standard diploma has increased from 24 percent in 2011-12 to 40 percent in 2012-13.
2. The percentage of students with disabilities in the regular class environment increased from 49 percent in 2012-2013 to 65 percent in 2013-2014.
3. The percentage of students with disabilities in the separate class environment decreased from 44 percent in 2012-2013 to 30 percent in 2013-2014.

## **ESE Monitoring and Compliance**

### **Records Review**

Bureau staff reviewed records of two students in the school district, from the two high schools. Standards from the IEP Implementation protocol were reviewed. No findings of noncompliance were noted in these records.

### **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 Gadsden 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 in order to be prepared for college and careers.

The school district's action plan included the following.

**Priority:** To decrease drop-out rate and increase graduation rate in Gadsden County through a tiered system of support.

**Desired outcome:** Increase the overall graduation rate from 61 percent (2011-12) to 75 percent by end of year 2014-15 and increase the graduation rate for students with disabilities. (The current rate of graduation is 24 percent.)

**How it will be measured:** 2014-15 school year graduation data will be obtained indicating graduation rate for all students and students with disabilities.

**Selected obstacle:** Lack of data available to identify and monitor students at risk of not graduating

The following actions were taken subsequent to the problem-solving session.

1. A representative from Project 10 provided professional development regarding early warning signs.
2. Staff determined data needed for an early warning signs system.
3. Staff met with a representative from Skyward who answered questions about the capabilities of the Skyward system to provide the desired information. Further training of MIS staff was discussed.
4. The first module for the purpose of providing training on data accessibility to school teams was developed. School principals were informed of the early warning data system.
5. Work was begun on researching early warning systems and dropout data for the purpose of developing exit interview questions and survey items.

| Next Steps                    |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Educational Environment (LRE) |  |
| Summary:                      | For the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, the Gadsden County School District was below the enrollment group and state averages for regular class placement and was higher than their enrollment group and state averages in separate class placement. However, improvement was noted. The average for regular class placement increased from 49 percent during 2012-13 to 65 percent during 2013-14. The average for separate class placement decreased from 44 percent during 2012-13, to 30 percent during 2013-14.  |
| Recommendations:              | It is recommended that improvement strategies in this area, as well as those identified in the Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) action plan, be continued.   |
| Required Action:              | None   |
| Graduation and Dropout Rates  |  |
| Summary:                      | <p>For the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, the Gadsden County School District's graduation rate was below that of the enrollment group and state averages. However, the graduation rate increased from 24 to 40 percent in 2012-13. Additional data show that the special diploma rate in 2012-13 was 43.9 percent, more than twice the state rate of 20.3 percent.</p> <p>For the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, at 7 percent, the Gadsden County School District's drop-out rate was above that of the enrollment group and state averages.</p>                                 |
| Recommendations:              | None   |
| Required Action               | Recent legislative changes in Florida that allow all students to earn a standard diploma, combined with a better prepared 2014-15 ninth grade cohort, should assist in the efforts to improve these results. It is imperative that the district ensure that current ninth grade students are enrolled in courses that will contribute to their graduation success. Students who participate in the alternate assessment and who are instructed on access points should be enrolled in access or higher level courses. All other students with disabilities pursuing a standard diploma |

| Next Steps   |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>must be enrolled in general education courses. Fundamental, access or ESE courses that have been deleted from the Course Code Directory would not be appropriate courses for enrollment. The district will review course enrollments for all students with disabilities in ninth grade and provide a report to BEESS by February 13, 2015.</p> <p>The district must choose one or more evidence-based practices to reduce the dropout rate and increase the standard diploma graduation rate, and implement with fidelity. In addition, the district should seek support from the BEESS, the problem-solving facilitator and discretionary projects and collaborate to address the graduation and dropout issues.</p> <p>The district will provide quarterly progress reports to the bureau chief, the first of which must be delivered by January 31, 2015.</p> |
| <b>18-22 Programs</b>  |   |
| Summary:   | During the visit to the 18-22 program it was noted that students were using outdated text books that had been removed from use by a neighboring district. It was also noted that resources for community-based instruction were somewhat restricted.  |
| Recommendations:   | The district should review the resources available to the program and make every effort to provide the resources necessary to help the students meet the goal of career readiness.  |
| Required Action:   | IEP goals must be aligned with curriculum.  |
| <b>Required IEP Team Members</b>                                   |   |
| Summary:   | 34 CFR §300.321 (a) indicates that members of a child's IEP team must include a general education teacher, if the child is, or may be participating in the regular education environment. General education teachers indicated that they did not always participate in the development of IEPs, and that, under these circumstances, they generally signed IEPs afterwards.   |
| Recommendations:   | It is recommended that compliance with 34 CFR §300.321 be monitored on a frequent basis.  |
| Required Action:   | The district must provide professional development to school administrators and general and special education teachers regarding the required procedures for the attendance of general education teachers at IEP team meetings. Confirmation of these trainings must be provided to the bureau by June 15, 2015, including sign-in sheets with signatures, printed names and title, in addition to the materials used for the training.   |
| <b>Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process</b> |   |
| Summary  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional action planning and problem solving for the school district in regard to the graduation rate, dropout rate and LRE will be scheduled by the SST liaison for the school district and the ESE director.</li> <li>• By January 20, 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.</li> </ul>  |

## Technical Assistance

1. Project 10: Transition Education Network is available to assist Florida school districts in building capacity to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and post-school outcomes. Project 10 serves as the primary conduit in addressing law and policy, effective practices and research-based interventions in the area of transition services for youth with disabilities.  
(<http://www.project10.info/>)
2. The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) provides TA and disseminates information on evidence-based practices leading to improved academic and functional achievement for students with disabilities, including lowering dropout rates and increasing graduation rates, preparing them for college or other postsecondary education and training and for the workforce. NTACC resources can be accessed at <http://nstattac.org/>.
3. The National Dropout Prevention Center for Student with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) provides high-quality, evidence-based technical assistance to build and implement sustainable programs and best practices that will yield positive results in dropout prevention, reentry, and school completion. NDPC-SD resources can be accessed at <http://www.ndpc-sd.org/>.
4. The Florida Division on Career Development and Transition, in partnership with BEESS and NSTTAC, sponsor a yearly VISIONS conference and NSTTAC Institute. BEESS provides financial assistance for district teams to attend this event, which focuses on evidence-based practices and provides facilitated transition team planning activities.
5. According to s. 1003.57, F.S., once every three years, each school district and school shall complete a Best Practices in Inclusive Education (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 Gadsden County School District**

**Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

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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 (i.e. do graduation rate significantly vary from school to school)?
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 (Elem, MS, HS) and by student outcomes.
7. How many (number and percentage) high school students at each grade/level are chronically absent (21 or more days) per year?
8. What are the chronic absence rates (21 or more days per year) for:
  - Students with disabilities
  - Race or ethnic group
  - Economically disadvantaged
  - English language learners
9. How many high school (numbers and percentage) students at each grade level have a GPA less than 2.0?
10. How many students at each grade level have GPA less than 2.0 in the following categories:
  - Students with disabilities
  - Race or ethnic group
  - Economically disadvantaged
  - English language learners
11. How many (number and percentage) high school students at each grade level are failing 1 or more courses?
12. How many high school students at each grade level are failing one or more courses in the following categories:
  - Students with disabilities
  - Race or ethnic group
  - Economically disadvantaged
  - English language learners
13. How many courses/classes at each high school have 20% or greater failure rates?

14. How many (number and percentage) high school students at each grade level have insufficient credit accrual for their grade/cohort level?
15. How many (number and percentage) high school students at each grade level have insufficient credit accrual in the following categories:
  - Students with disabilities
  - Race or ethnic group
  - Economically disadvantaged
  - English language learners
16. What is the rate of discipline referrals (ODRs and Suspensions) per 100 students at each grade level in high school?
17. What is the rate of discipline referrals (ODRs and Suspensions) per 100 students at each grade level in high school in the following categories:
  - Students with disabilities
  - Chronically absent students
  - Race or ethnic groups
  - Economically disadvantaged
  - English language learners
18. What systems are in place to monitor student attendance, GPA, course failures and credit accrual
  - How frequently can the data be accessed
  - Who has access to these data
19. What evidence-based practices should be occurring at the school level specific to BEESS indicators being targeted for improvement?
20. Are the expected evidence-based practices occurring sufficiently?
21. 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?)
22. How are school-level evidence-based practices being supported by the district specific, to BEESS indicators being targeted for improvement?
23. Are district supports for school-level practices being provided sufficiently?
24. 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?)
25. What strategies, initiatives and resources have been identified in the DIAP with regard to AMO targets for students with disabilities?
26. 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?
27. 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?
28. What is occurring with regard to implementing the strategies in the ESE Policies and Procedures document with regard to reducing incidents of restraint and seclusion?
29. 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.

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| AP       | Advanced placement  |
| BEESS    | Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services      |
| BPIE     | Best Practices in Inclusive Education                     |
| CEIS     | Coordinated early intervening services                    |
| CFR      | Code of Federal Regulations                               |
| DA       | Differentiated Accountability                             |
| DIAP     | District Improvement and Assistance Plan                  |
| EBD      | Emotional or behavioral disability                        |
| ESE      | Exceptional student education                             |
| FCAT 2.0 | Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test 2.0                 |
| FIN      | Florida Inclusion Network                                 |
| FDLRS    | Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System          |
| FDOE     | Florida Department of Education                           |
| F.S.     | Florida Statutes  |
| GPA      | Grade point average                                       |
| IDEA     | Individuals with Disabilities Education Act               |
| IEP      | Individual educational plan                               |
| LEA      | Local educational agency                                  |
| LRE      | Least restrictive environment                             |
| MIS      | Management Information Systems                            |
| MTSS     | Multi-tiered system of support                            |
| 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                                  |
| SLD      | Specific learning disability                              |
| SP&P     | Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures     |
| SPP      | State Performance Plan                                    |
| SST      | State Support Team  |
| USF      | University of South Florida                               |



Pam Stewart, Commissioner  
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