

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

**Hamilton County School District
March 12-13, 2014**



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

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 2, 2014

Thomas P. Moffses, Jr., Superintendent
Hamilton County School District
5683 U.S. Highway 129 South, Suite 1
Jasper, Florida 32052

Dear Superintendent Moffses:

We are pleased to provide you with the **2013-14 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Hamilton 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 12-13, 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 focused on those State Performance Plan indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for coordinated early intervening services and those indicators that affected equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities. Additionally, the process focused 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 Hamilton County School District was selected for an on-site visit due to equity and access issues related to early intervening services for discipline. 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 Moffses
December 2, 2014
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Ms. Betty Linton, director, ESE 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 providing high-quality evidence-based practices to ensure that the students in Hamilton County School District are college and career ready.

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 to increase the graduation rate of students who are college and career ready. 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 Hamilton 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: Betty Linton
Cathy Bishop
Mary Elizabeth Conn
Patricia Howell
Annette Oliver

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Hamilton County School District

March 12-13, 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 over-identified.

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 focused 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/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 included four phases:

- Phase 1 was composed of planning activities that occurred in advance of the first on-site visit to the school district. (Completed)
- Phase 2 was the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST). (Completed)
- 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.

In a letter dated August 27, 2013, the superintendent of the Hamilton County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit due to equity and access issues related to early intervening services for discipline.

Secondary Focus Areas

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 (IPI) and restraint and seclusion. Instead, bureau members of the school district's SST reviewed a sample of records for IPI. Between August 2013 and February 2014, there were no incidents of restraints reported in the Hamilton County School District. The school district does not allow the use of seclusion. Based on the focus of discipline for the on-site visit, a sampling of records for suspension and expulsion (SE) was also reviewed by the bureau members.

In preparation for the monitoring and assistance on-site visit to the Hamilton County School District, and in consultation with the Hamilton County School District's ESE director, it was determined that the SST and the school district would include graduation rate and postsecondary outcomes as secondary focus areas during the on-site visit.

School Selection

Upon review of the school district's data reported via the FDOE's web-based reporting systems for CEIS and SPP indicators and incidents of restraint and seclusion, the SST determined that the 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process would include the following schools:

- Central Hamilton Elementary School
- Greenwood School
- Hamilton County High School

The Greenwood School is a public separate day school serving students, ages 3-22, from Hamilton, Suwannee and Madison Counties.

On-Site Activities

SST – On-Site Visit Team

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

FDOE, BEESS

- Monica Verra-Tirado, chief (facilitator)
- Annette Oliver, program specialist (co-facilitator), Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems
- Mary Elizabeth Conn, educational program director, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring

FDOE, BEESS Discretionary Projects

- Carly Detlefsen, region 2, transition representative, Project 10: Transition Education Network
- Lori Garcia, director, Project 10: Transition Education Network
- Dana Huggins, project manager, 3A, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Carol Milton, project coordinator, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Associate Centers (FDLRS) Gateway
- Martha Murray (problem-solving facilitator), technical assistance specialist, Florida's Positive Behavior Support: Multi-tiered System of Supports (PBS:MTSS) Project
- Sallie Payne, facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)

Data Collection

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- School-level administrator interviews – four participants
- Student focus groups and interviews – three groups, 19 participants
- Completion of IPI protocol – five students
- Completion of SE protocol – five 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 five students selected for review of IPI and discipline records:

- IEPs for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years
- Current functional behavioral assessment
- Current behavioral intervention plan
- Discipline and attendance records for the 2013-14 school year
- Progress reports and report cards (2012-13 and 2013-14 school years)
- Student's current class schedule
- Verification of the provision of related services and accommodations (lesson plans, teacher schedules and therapy logs)

Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

Prior to the on-site visit, the Hamilton County 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. Hamilton County School District's questions were related to early intervening services for discipline, graduation rates and postsecondary outcomes. A list of these questions may be found in Appendix A of this report.

Results

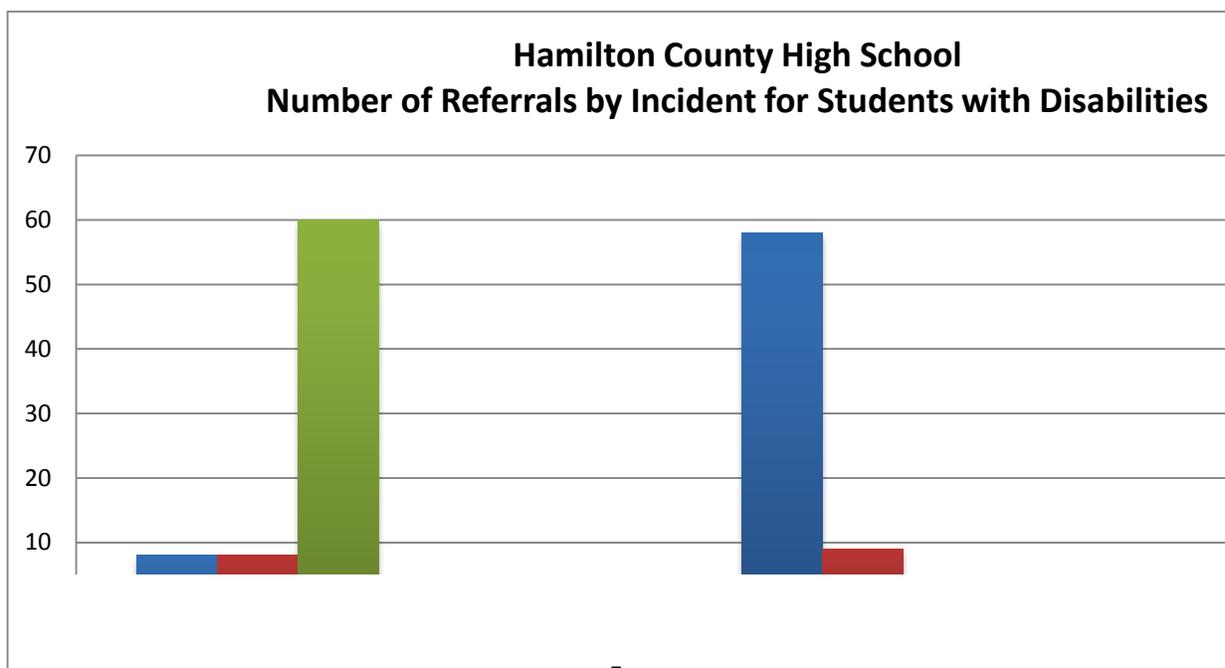
The following results reflect the data collected and reviewed through the activities of the 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process for Hamilton County School District. Also included are commendations, findings of noncompliance and next steps, as applicable.

CEIS and SPP 4 – Discipline, Suspension and Expulsion

The Hamilton County School District reported the following regarding discipline, suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities:

- In regard to disproportionality of discipline related to race, when compared to other races and ethnic groups, black students with disabilities in the Hamilton County School District have a 3.68 percent risk ratio of receiving disciplinary actions.
- The discipline data for students with disabilities at the Hamilton County High School for September 2012 through February 2013 indicated a total of 22 ESE referrals resulting in either in-school-suspensions (ISS) or out-of-school suspensions (OSS).
 - Of the 22 referrals, 16 were given to males.

- Ethnic groups receiving referrals included students who are black, white, Hispanic and of mixed races. Fourteen of the 22 students were black.
- The 22 referrals included students with the exceptionalities of intellectual disabilities (InD), specific learning disabilities (SLD), other health impairment (OHI), language impairment (LI), speech impairment (SI) and emotional or behavioral disabilities (EBD).
- During the 2012-13 school year, students with disabilities in grades 9 and 10 were more likely to be suspended than students in other grades.
- It was determined by the Hamilton School District that black male students identified as having a disability of InD or SLD were more likely to receive ISS or OSS than all other groups of students with disabilities.
- From September 2013 to February 2014, Hamilton County School District reported discipline referrals for 25 students with disabilities.
 - Twenty-three of the 25 students attended Hamilton County High School. Seventeen of the 25 students were males. Fifteen of the 25 students were black. Other discipline referrals included students who were white or Hispanic.
 - Referrals included students identified as having InD, SLD, OHI, LI, SI, EBD and orthopedic impairments.
 - During this period, students in grade 7 at Hamilton County High School were more likely to be suspended or expelled than students in other grades.
- Data from the 2013 LEA profile indicated that the school district decreased in the number of suspensions or expulsions of more than 10 days for students with disabilities. Three percent of the students with disabilities were suspended or expelled for more than 10 days during the 2009-10 school year; the total decreased to 2 percent in the 2010-11 school year and to less than 1 percent in the 2011-12 school year.
- Data from the 2012 and 2013 LEA profiled indicated that students who were not identified as students with a disability had a 2 percent suspension or expulsion rate during the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years. This decreased to 1 percent for the 2011-12 school year.
 - The three elementary schools in the school district and the Hamilton County High School contributed to the suspension or expulsion rates for the 2010-11 school year, and only the Hamilton County High School contributed to the rates during the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years.



Evidence-based Practices

The Hamilton County School District reported the following evidence-based practices related to discipline:

- In-school and after-school tutoring services are provided by highly qualified teachers to assist students with academic needs at all school sites within the school district.
- Summer Transition-Bridge programs are offered during the summer for students entering kindergarten and students transitioning from grade 6 to 7.
- Other summer programs include Migrant, Credit Recovery, Summer Reading Camp and Summer Reserve Officers' Training Corps Leadership program.
- During the summer of 2013, a summer enrichment program was conducted at Central Hamilton Elementary School.
- The ESE director reported that Hamilton County School District has recommitted to MTSS training through Florida's PBS program. During Professional Development Day on February 7, 2014, teachers and staff in the Hamilton County School District participated in an orientation to PBS.

In addition to support from the PBS project, the Hamilton County School District reported that the following services relating to discipline were provided to teachers and staff:

- FDLRS Gateway has continued to provide training through the Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation and Success classroom management model to beginning teachers, as well as refresher training to administrators. This BEESS discretionary project has provided additional training to teachers and staff in the Hamilton County School District, including the following: Tough Kids, Tough Kids Social Skills, Solutions to Classroom Discipline and initial and refresher training in Crisis Prevention Institute's Nonviolent Crisis Intervention.
- The school district has collaborated with Family & Behavioral Health Services, Inc., to provide counseling for students receiving ESE services and students in the general education classroom who had multiple discipline referrals.
- The school district has contracted with Resolutions Health Alliance (RHA) to provide a certified behavior analyst to assist with classroom management training and classroom observations, conduct functional behavior analysis and develop functional behavior intervention plans for students who are in the general education classroom and students who receive ESE services. RHA has also provided counseling services to students who have been identified by the school district as "at risk" due to discipline and behavioral problems.

Hamilton County School District reported that for the 2013-14 school year, the school district has identified and utilized the following strategies, initiatives and resources in the development of the school district's District Improvement and Assistance Plan (DIAP): MTSS and Response to Intervention, Performance Matters, Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading, Ongoing Progress Monitoring, Skyward Data and Professional Development 360. The school district has also extended student learning opportunities to include tutoring after school, which provides reinforcement of necessary benchmarks for all annual measurable objectives targets for all students.

Yearly Implementation Plan (YIP)

On December 2, 2013, the school district's PBS team, with the facilitation by staff from the Florida PBS:MTSS project, developed a YIP. The results of the plan were incorporated into the action-planning and problem-solving process during the on-site monitoring visit.

The Hamilton County School District's PBS team included:

- Thomas Moffses, superintendent
- Betty Linton, ESE, prekindergarten coordinator, district coordinator for PBS
- April Johnson, reading specialist
- Kip McLeod, middle and high school principal
- Terry Miller, staffing specialist, ESE
- Karen Mitchell, student services coordinator
- Phyllis Porter, federal programs coordinator
- Janell Warfel, staffing specialist, ESE
- Lee Wetherington-Zamara, elementary school principal
- Philip Pinello, director of administrative services

The PBS team developed one-year and three-year goals:

One-Year Goals

- Personnel at all schools, except Greenwood School, will be trained in PBS.
- All coaching facilitators will be trained in their new role with PBS.
- Community awareness regarding PBS will continue.

Three-Year Goals

- The school district will no longer be targeted for SPP Indicators by FDOE.
- Data will reveal a decline in discipline referrals.
- Tier 1 PBS will be implemented with fidelity at all participating schools.

Areas of focus in the YIP include the following:

- Behavioral expertise
- Coaching
- Demonstration and implementation
- Evaluation
- Funding
- Leadership and district coordination
- Leadership support and policies
- Training
- Visibility

SPP Indicator 1 – Graduation rate

- Based on the 2013 LEA Profile, for the 2011-12 school year, the federal uniform high school graduation rate for all students in Hamilton County School District was 55 percent. For all students in the enrollment group of small districts in Florida, the graduation rate was 69 percent. The state rate was 74 percent.
- Based on the 2013 LEA Profile, for the 2011-12 school year, the federal uniform high school graduation rate for students with disabilities in Hamilton County School District was 38

percent. For students with disabilities in the enrollment group of small districts in Florida, the graduation rate was 46 percent. The state rate was 48 percent.

- Hamilton County School District reported that, in the 2012-13 school year, 43 students graduated with a standard diploma and three with a special diploma option.
- Hamilton County School District reported that students beginning in grade 9 at the Hamilton County High School and the Greenwood School were contributing to the low graduation rate, as these students were often identified as at risk of dropping out of school.
 - Beginning in grade 9, students who fail courses are offered Credit Recovery classes.
 - Hamilton County High School uses counselors to track student course requirements and utilizes a graduation coach to work with vocational schools to increase entry into postschool placements.

SPP Indicator 14 – Postsecondary Outcomes (Postschool Outcomes)

Percentage of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school and were:

- A. Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school;
- B. Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school; or
- C. Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving.

Hamilton County School District’s 2013 LEA Profile indicated the following postschool outcomes for students with disabilities for the 2008-09 through 2010-11 school years:

Postschool Outcomes			
Students with Disabilities in Higher Education	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Hamilton County School District	13%	<1%	7%
Enrollment Group	22%	32%	25%
State	27%	27%	27%
Students with Disabilities in Higher Education, Competitively Employed			
Hamilton County School District	23%	6%	7%
Enrollment Group	32%	41%	37%
State	37%	39%	39%
Students with Disabilities in any Employment or Continuing Education			
Hamilton County School District	27%	6%	14%
Enrollment Group	42%	56%	47%
State	50%	51%	52%

Evidence-based Practices

The Hamilton County School District reported the following evidence-based practices related to graduation and postsecondary outcomes:

- For the 2013-14 school year, the school district has received an Interagency Council Mini-Grant through Project 10. The Interagency Council meets at least quarterly and involves a variety of agencies and LEA personnel. The council plans for conferences, transition fairs, parent training and resource guides for student and family use.
- Students with disabilities and their parents at Hamilton County High School have the opportunity annually to meet with vocational rehabilitation counselors during Vocational Rehabilitation Day.
- At least once annually, high school students in the school district have the opportunity to meet with personnel from Suwannee-Hamilton Vocational-Technical School.
- The school district encourages all eligible high school students to take the American College Testing entrance examination and will pay for two administrations of this examination.
- To assist students in meeting graduation requirements, the school district provides graduation coaches and after-school tutoring for students in the Hamilton County High School who need these services.
- The Hamilton County School District is located near cities in the South Georgia area. The school district is exploring the ability to track students who leave the state to attend postsecondary institutions or seek employment in these cities close to the county.

Student Focus Groups

Student focus groups were conducted at Hamilton County High School and included students with disabilities in middle and high school grades who have an IEP and students who are not identified as students with a disability. Through these focus groups, 19 students provided feedback on the following topics: IEP team meetings and parental participation, career and technical education, academics, extracurricular activities, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test ® 2.0 (FCAT 2.0), diploma options, dropout rate and discipline, suspension and expulsion.

Comments from the students included the following:

- There need to be more career and technical programs at the high school level that could help students continue their education at a vocational or technical school or an institution of higher learning.
- There are no post-secondary education programs in Hamilton County. Students and their families find travel to Madison or Suwannee counties for these programs to be difficult.
- Many students drop out of school because they cannot pass the FCAT 2.0. Some students stated that they are prepared for the FCAT 2.0 examination, but they would like to read more books and work on more projects rather than to focus only on the FCAT 2.0.
- Tardiness is one of the main reasons for ISS or OSS. Overall, the students expressed concern for their peers who missed instruction due to suspensions.
- Some students reported they felt that some teachers had favorite students and those were the students who would not receive dress code violations.
- Students in ESE programs in high school stated that they felt supported in the general education classes. They stated that most teachers teach in a way that helps them grasp concepts. Several were concerned about their math class. They reported that they wanted a math class that would provide more practice assignments, opportunities to practice for tests, study guides and the option to take tests in a separate room with extra time.

Commendations

1. The federal uniform high school graduation rate of 38 percent for the 2011-12 school year for students with disabilities was an increase from the 15 percent rate for the 2010-11 school year.
2. The school district's dropout rate decreased from the 2009-10 to the 2011-12 school year for the following groups:
 - a. Students with disabilities – 10 percent to less than 1 percent
 - b. Students with EBD – 6 percent to less than 1 percent
 - c. Students with SLD – 10 percent to less than 1 percent

For the 2011-12 school year, the Hamilton County School District's dropout rates were lower than the enrollment group of small school districts in Florida and the state averages for students with disabilities, students with EBD and students with SLD.

3. Hamilton County School District's 2013 LEA Profile provides the comparisons for educational environments (placements) in the school district, enrollment group of small school districts in Florida and state average percentages.

Educational environments percentages include the number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 in regular class, resource room, separate class and other separate environment, divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 reported in October (survey 2).

- Regular class includes students who spend 80 percent or more of their school week with nondisabled peers.
- Resource room includes students spending between 40 and 80 percent of their school week with nondisabled peers.
- Separate class includes students spending less than 40 percent of their week with nondisabled peers.
- Other separate environment includes students served in public or private separate schools, residential placements or hospital or homebound placements.

Regular class, resource room and separate class placements are shown in the table below for the 2010-11 through 2012-13 school years. Over these three years, Hamilton County School District has shown decreases in resource room and separate class placements and increases in regular class placement. Hamilton County School District's regular class placement for 2012-13 was higher than the enrollment group of small school districts, as well as the state's percentage.

School Year	Regular Class			Resource Room			Separate Class		
	District	Enrollment Group	State	District	Enrollment Group	State	District	Enrollment Group	State
2012-13	73%	72%	71%	5%	7%	11%	11%	15%	14%
2011-12	66%	72%	69%	9%	7%	12%	12%	15%	15%
2010-11	60%	72%	69%	9%	9%	12%	16%	16%	15%

Source: FDOE, 2013 LEA Profile

ESE Monitoring and Compliance

Records Review

Bureau staff members who were members of the SST reviewed records of five students in the Hamilton County School District. Standards from the IPI and SE protocols were reviewed for each of the students. There were no findings of noncompliance in the review of these records.

Student Records Review	
Number of IPI protocols completed	5
Number of standards per IPI protocol	8
Number of SE protocols completed	5
Number of standards per SE protocol	10
Total number of standards	90
Total number of findings of noncompliance	0

Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps

As part of the monitoring and assistance on-site visit, the SST members, superintendent, ESE director and other representatives from the Hamilton 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: 100 percent of students will graduate college and career ready.

- Desired outcome: Graduation rate will be 100 percent in the Hamilton County School District.
- Measured by: The goal rates established by the school district.

Action Plan Goal: To revise the school district's current professional development plan to reflect a systemic approach for ongoing professional learning that aligns to the goals established by the school district to include rationale and specific identified skill sets and supports the school district's mission of 100 percent of students graduating college and career ready.

Hamilton County School District's action plan will be implemented by the District Leadership Team with the assistance of designated discretionary project staff from the SST.

Next Steps	
Early intervening services for discipline	
Summary:	For the 2013-14 school year, Hamilton County School District was required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA, Part B funds for early intervening services due to the following: the incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS or expulsion was 3.5 times more likely to occur when compared to all other races combined. Hamilton County School District's ratio was 3.68 for black students.

	Data indicated that since the 2008-09 school year, 2013-14 was the first school year the Hamilton County School District was targeted for early intervening services in any category.
Recommendations:	<p>Hamilton County School District should continue to conduct focus groups with teachers, students and their parents in an effort to identify measures to decrease the number of discipline referrals and suspensions and expulsions.</p> <p>Hamilton County School District's PBS team should continue to work on the goals established in the school district's YIP.</p>
Required Action:	N/A
Summary:	<p>For the 2011-12 school year, the federal uniform high school graduation rate for all students in Hamilton County School District was 55 percent. For all students in the enrollment group of small districts in Florida, the graduation rate was 69 percent; the state rate was 74 percent. The graduation rate for students with disabilities in the school district was 38 percent. For students with disabilities in the enrollment group of small districts in Florida, the graduation rate was 46 percent; the state rate was 48 percent.</p> <p>Data for SPP Indicator 14 for Hamilton County School District revealed that the school district's postsecondary outcomes are significantly below the state's percentages, as well as the school district's enrollment group of small districts in Florida for youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school and were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school; • Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school; or • Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving.
Recommendations:	<p>The Hamilton County School District should continue to use their current data management systems to monitor all students' grades, attendance issues and discipline referrals, to ensure that the students stay on track for graduation.</p> <p>The Hamilton County School District should continue to work closely with Project 10: Transition Education Network to increase graduation rates and postsecondary outcomes.</p>

Next Steps	
	The Hamilton County School District should continue to build partnerships with institutions of higher education and career certification programs to offer additional programs so that students graduate college and career ready.
Required Action:	N/A
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process	
Summary:	Additional action planning and problem solving for other priorities for the Hamilton County School District have been scheduled by the ESE director and assigned SST liaison for the school district.
Recommendation:	<p>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.</p> <p>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, and how results can be incorporated into existing district plans (http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/).</p>
Required Action:	By March 31, 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 (MTSS) 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/docshare/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. The Project 10: Transition Education Network, <http://www.projct10.info/>, assists Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders 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 between the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services and school district personnel in addressing law and policy, effective practices and research-based interventions in the area of transition services for youth with disabilities. The project also supports transition initiatives developed through the BEESS Strategic Plan.

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

2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance

State Support Team for Hamilton 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 subgroup)
 - English language learners
 - Comparison within and across above subgroups
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) 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 to implement the strategies in the SP&P 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
BPIE	Best Practices for Inclusive Education
CEIS	Coordinated early intervening services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
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
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
InD	Intellectual disability
IPI	IEP implementation
ISS	In-school-suspension
LEA	Local educational agency
MTSS	Multi-tiered system of support
OHI	Other health impairment
OSS	Out-of-school suspension
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
RHA	Resolutions Health Alliance
SE	Suspension or expulsion
SEDNET	Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disabilities
SLD	Specific learning disabilities
SI	Speech impairment
SP&P	Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures
SPP	State Performance Plan
SST	State Support Team
YIP	Yearly Implementation Plan



Pam Stewart, Commissioner

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