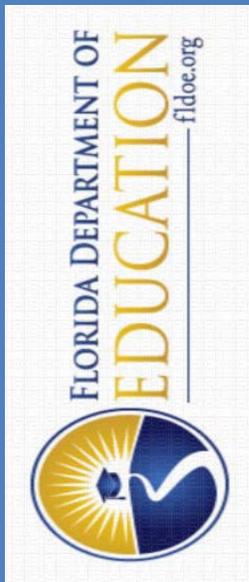


**2014-15 Exceptional Student Education  
Monitoring and Assistance  
On-Site Visit Report**

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**Hamilton School District  
January 20-21, 2015**



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

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June 2, 2015

Thomas P. Moffses, Jr., Superintendent  
Hamilton County School District  
5683 US Highway 129 S Ste. 1  
Jasper, FL 32052-3743

Dear Superintendent Moffses:

We are pleased to provide you with the 2014-15 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Hamilton County School District. The 2014-15 monitoring process focused on reviewing progress for the action plan developed during the 2013-14 on-site visit as well as newly identified targeted areas. The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) is committed to providing intensive supports for districts selected during the 2013-14 school year for three years of progress monitoring, of which your district was one.

The Hamilton County School District was selected as needing continued intensive supports for graduation rates, dropout rates, and least restrictive environment. The on-site visit was conducted by a State Support Team (SST) that included BEESS, Florida Department of Education and discretionary project staff.

Multiple sources of information were integrated to develop this report including analyzing recent data and evaluating the effectiveness of the district's action plan. This process focuses on a shift from ESE compliance to outcomes to prepare all students for college and career readiness, which includes: 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.

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

Superintendent Moffses  
June 2, 2015  
Page Two

Ms. Betty Linton, Director of ESE, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for the on-site visit and throughout the visit. This report will be posted on the BEESS website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/mon-home.asp>.

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](mailto: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  
Patricia Howell  
Jessica Brattain

**2014-15 Exceptional Student Education  
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On-Site Visit Report**

**Hamilton County School District**

**January 20-21, 2015**

**2014-15 Exceptional Student Education  
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**Hamilton County School District**

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**2014-15 Exceptional Student Education  
Monitoring and Assistance  
On-Site Visit Report**

**Hamilton County School District**

**January 20-21, 2015**

**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 (sections 1001.03(3), 1003.571 and 1008.32, Florida Statutes [F.S.]) and rules. 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 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 students with disabilities, in specific disability categories, the placement of students 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 students in the LEA, particularly, but not exclusively, for students 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 2014-15 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 Students with IEPs aged six through 21 years:
  - 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 3) 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 on the FDOE website.
- Seclusion – Rate of incidents of seclusion, as reported on the FDOE website.

The 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). **The Hamilton County School District initial on-site visit took place on March 12-14, 2014.**
- 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. **This report reflects a follow-up to the 2013-14 monitoring visit and identifies two new areas of concern: dropout rate and least restrictive environment.**
- 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 December 15, 2014, the superintendent of the Hamilton County School District was informed that the bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: graduation rate, dropout rate and least restrictive environment.

### **On-Site Activities**

The Hamilton County School District on-site visit was coordinated with the Department of Education Title 1, Bureau of Federal Programs and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Food, Nutrition and Wellness. At the beginning of the on-site visit, staff from the three offices met with district staff at the invitation of the district superintendent to discuss the purpose for the visits. BEESS staff attended the Title 1 opening meeting. BEESS staff also participated in a parent night hosted by the Title 1 office which included parents of students with disabilities. During the parent night, BEESS staff answered individual questions from parents and community members related to students with disabilities. BEESS contact information was also provided to those individuals.

### **On-Site Visit Team**

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

#### **FDOE, BEESS**

- Cathy Bishop, Administrator, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
- Patricia Howell, Program Director, DRM
- Jessica Brattain, Program Specialist, DRM
- Janie Register, Program Specialist, Instructional Support Services

#### **FDOE, Bureau Discretionary Projects**

- Martha Murray, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project: Multi-tiered System of Supports (PBS:MTSS)
- Carly Detlefsen, Transition Representative, Region 2, Project 10: Transition Education Network (Project 10)
- Dana Huggins, Project Manager, The Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Carol Milton, Project Coordinator, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), Gateway
- Kimberlee Oakes, Facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
- Greg Valcante, Director, Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD)
- Victoria McKenzie, Region MTSS Specialist, Region II, Differentiated Accountability (DA)
- Denise Barrett, K-12 Director of Standards Implementation, FDOE

## Status Update for the 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance Visit

The following information is taken from the **2013-2014 on-site monitoring** report. A status update to the required actions and recommendations has been added for each area listed.

<b>Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-site Visit</b>	
<b>Early intervening services for discipline</b>	
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>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 in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<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 Positive Behavior Support (PBS) team should continue to work on the goals established in the school district's Yearly Implementation Plan.</p>
<b>Required Action:</b>	N/A
<b>Status Update 2014-15 Monitoring Visit:</b>	<p>The required set-aside funds for CEIS were used to support behavior services and counseling for general education students, PBS training and implementation, classroom resources and material for professional learning communities (book study).</p> <p>The district was not required to set aside funds related to early intervening services for the 2014-15 school year.</p>
<b>SPP 1 – Graduation rate and SPP 14 – Postsecondary outcomes</b>	
<b>Summary:</b>	<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>

<b>Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-site Visit</b>	
	<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, who had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school;</li> <li>• Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school; or</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
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> <p>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 who graduate are college and career ready.</p>
Required Action:	N/A
<b>Status Update 2014-15 Monitoring Visit:</b>	The district described actions they had taken to target students most at risk for not meeting graduation requirements, including collaboration with, and assistance from, Project 10. The outcome of these actions was an increased percentage of students who graduated at the end of the 2013-14 school year.
<b>Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process</b>	
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:	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,

<b>Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-site Visit</b>	
	<p>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 (<a href="http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/">http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/</a>).</p>
Required Action:	By <b>March 31, 2015</b> , 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.
<b>Status Update 2014-15 Monitoring Visit:</b>	Required action was completed on January 20-21, 2015. The district's BPIE was scheduled for March 9, 2015. The Hamilton County School District has scheduled future meetings with the SST to continue district improvements.

## 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-site Visit Results

The following data is related to the focus areas and activities for the 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-site Visit for the Hamilton County School District.

### Graduation Rates

**Federal Uniform High School Graduation Rate:** This calculation uses the number of first-time ninth graders from four years ago, plus incoming transfer students on the same schedule to graduate, minus students from this population who transferred out or left to enroll in a private school or home education divided by the number of standard diplomas from the same group.

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Hamilton	15.38%	37.50%	11.11%	54.55%
State	44.37%	47.71%	52.33%	55.06%

### Dropout Rates

**The Federal Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities:** The number of students who exited special education due to dropping out, divided by the number of students who graduated with a regular high school diploma, special diploma, certificate of completion, special certificate of completion, dropped out or died.

	2012-13	2013-14
Hamilton	50%	<1%
State	20.3%	19.2%

## Educational Environment

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** The number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 in regular class divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 reported in October (Survey 2).

### Students with Disabilities in Regular Class

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Hamilton	66%	73%	67.2%	76.8%
State	69%	71%	71.3%	74.4%

The district's BPIE was conducted on March 9, 2015, when the indicator tally sheet was completed. The following four indicators were selected as a priority:

- #6 - District has key personnel with expertise in inclusive best practices for all students with disabilities who oversee, coordinate, monitor and provide technical assistance for the implementation of best practices for inclusive education at the district and school levels.
- #7 - District has key personnel with expertise in the MTSS and positive behavior intervention plans who provide ongoing professional development and technical assistance to schools to ensure that students who need them receive multi-tiered behavioral supports in general education classrooms and natural contexts.
- # 14 - District provides job-embedded, collaborative professional development and technical assistance to all schools to integrate IEP goals and objectives and the Florida Standards in general education classes and natural contexts.
- #18 - District facilitates and supports access to assistive technology, including augmentative and alternative communication devices, as determined by the assessed need of students with disabilities for meaningful learning, participation and communication in general education and natural contexts.

The district indicated that they would like to combine all of their action steps into one action plan in order to track and to monitor progress. The BPIE team met on April 21, 2015, to begin this process and plans to meet on June 10, 2015, to complete the plan which will serve as their district service plan.

The SST members, ESE director and representatives from the Hamilton County School District participated in a problem-solving and action-planning process on January 21, 2015. The group reviewed the data collected for the focus areas and developed the next steps.

## 2014-15 Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps

Next Steps	
<b>Graduation</b>	
Summary:	The district's graduation rate for students with disabilities was 11 percent for the 2012-13 school year. It increased significantly to 54.55 percent during the 2013-14 school year.

Recommendation:	The Hamilton County School District should continue to work closely with Project 10 to graph and analyze student data in order to take needed action to ensure students meet graduation requirements. The district will build their internal capacity to analyze data annually.
Required Action:	N/A
<b>Dropout</b>	
Summary:	The district's Federal dropout rate for students with disabilities, per ED Facts data, was 50 percent for the 2012-13 school year. The district felt that dropout rates were related to lack of student engagement and discipline issues. During the 2013-14 school year the rate decreased to less than one percent.
Recommendation:	The Hamilton County School District should continue to work to implement the action plans developed related to promoting instruction in social and behavioral expectations and implementation related to PBS, including incorporating elements of PBS in the district's student code of conduct. The district and discretionary partners will continue to analyze data trends related to student tardiness and skipping that result in decreased instructional time.
Required Action:	N/A
<b>Educational Environment (LRE)</b>	
Summary:	The district's educational environment data for regular classroom placement the 2013-14 school year was 67 percent. District staff provided updated data for August 2014 through January 2015 for students with disabilities ages six to 21 in regular class placement that identified 76.8 percent. The district indicated that improvement was due to changes at the middle and high school levels where students previously in a separate class environment were now included in regular education. In addition, the district conducted their BPIE on March 9, 2015. The next issue that the district will address is increasing instructional support for students with disabilities in the general education setting.
Recommendation:	Hamilton County School District should continue action plans related to providing ESE teachers instructional materials and curriculum maps, creation of peer tutors/mentors and additional support for professional development for general education teachers to include resources to assist in obtaining ESE certification.
Required Action:	N/A

Phase 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process	
Summary:	By <b>March 31, 2016</b> , the SST, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the school district's progress or slippage in the areas of focus and determine additional next steps, as appropriate.

**Commendations**

1. It was evident that the district staff engaged in a positive working relationship with all discretionary project partners.
2. Staff members including the superintendent, ESE district staff, high school dean of students and graduation coach participated actively during the on-site visit and demonstrated commitment to positive changes that will impact student outcomes.
3. The district has implemented positive behavioral support in a thoughtful and intentional manner that is likely to result in long-term success.

## 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](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://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/monitoring/ese-policies-procedures-spp.stml>
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
  - **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://project10.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 BEESS 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**

**2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance**

**State Support Team for Hamilton County School District**

**Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

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

**Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

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

BEES	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BPIE	Best Practices for Inclusive Education
CARD	Center for Autism and Related Disorders
CEIS	Coordinated Early Intervening Services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DA	Differentiated Accountability
DRM	Dispute Resolution and Monitoring
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
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
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PBS: MTSS	Positive Behavior Support/Multi-tiered System of Supports
SEDNET	Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities
SP&P	Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures
SPP	State Performance Plan
SST	State Support Team



Pam Stewart, Commissioner

**313212 A**