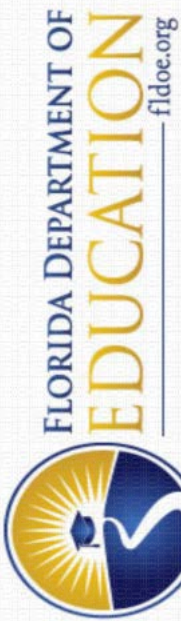


**2014-15 Exceptional Student Education  
Monitoring and Assistance  
On-Site Visit Report**

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**Pinellas County School District  
May 11-13, 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).

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

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July 24, 2015

Dr. Michael A. Grego, Superintendent  
Pinellas County School District  
301 4th Street SW  
Largo, Florida 33770-2942

Dear Superintendent Grego:

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) is pleased to provide you with the 2014-15 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Pinellas 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. 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 Pinellas County School District was selected as needing continued intensive supports due to coordinated early intervening services related to discipline and over-identification of students with emotional or behavioral disabilities, graduation rates, least restrictive environment and incidents of seclusion. The on-site visit was conducted by a State Support Team (SST) that included BEESS staff, department staff 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. In addition, if determined necessary, district and school personnel were interviewed and student focus groups were conducted. 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 Grego

July 24, 2015

Page Two

Ms. Lisa Grant, Executive Director of ESE, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for the on-site visit and throughout the visit. In addition, school-level personnel welcomed SST members and demonstrated a continued commitment to the education of students in the school district. This report will be posted on the BEESS website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/e/se/mon-home.asp>.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Pinellas 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: Lisa Grant  
Cathy Bishop  
Patricia Howell  
Misty Bradley

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

**Pinellas County School District**

**May 11-13, 2015**

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

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

**Pinellas County School District**

**May 11-13, 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 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, 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 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 document.

## ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process

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 children with IEPs aged six 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 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). **This visit was conducted on May 13-16, 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 a new area of concern, educational environments (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.



## **On-Site Activities**

In a letter dated March 18, 2015, the superintendent of the Pinellas County School District was informed that the bureau would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit regarding the targeted areas of concern that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities within the school district.

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

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

#### **FDOE, BEESS**

- Monica Verra-Tirado, Chief, BEESS
- Misty Bradley, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
- Jackie Roumou, Program Specialist, DRM
- Jerry Brown, Program Specialist, DRM
- David Wheeler, School Psychologist, Student Support Services Project (SSSP)
- Marie LaCap, Program Specialist, Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems (PAADS)

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

- Anna Winneker, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Positive Behavior Support: Multi-Tiered System of Supports (PBS:MTSS)
- Lisa Yount, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Florida's Problem Solving: Response to Intervention (PS:Rtl) Project
- Melissa Andress, Project Manager, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Federico Valadez, Regional Transition Representative, Project 10: Transition Education Network
- Mindy Stevens, Executive Director, Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)
- Margaret Sullivan, Program Director, State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)
- Cindy Medici, Project Manager, SPDG
- Paula Nelson, Manager, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), Gulfcoast

### **Data Collection**

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Review of recent data
- School and district-level administrator focus groups -15 participants
- Teacher focus group - two participants
- Student focus groups - 10 participants

### **Status Updates on the 2013-14 On-Site Visit**

The following information is excerpted from the 2013-14 on-site monitoring report. Additional information has been added in bold to update the status of the recommendations and required actions.

**Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-site visit**

Early intervening services

Disproportionate representation of students with disabilities – SPP 10

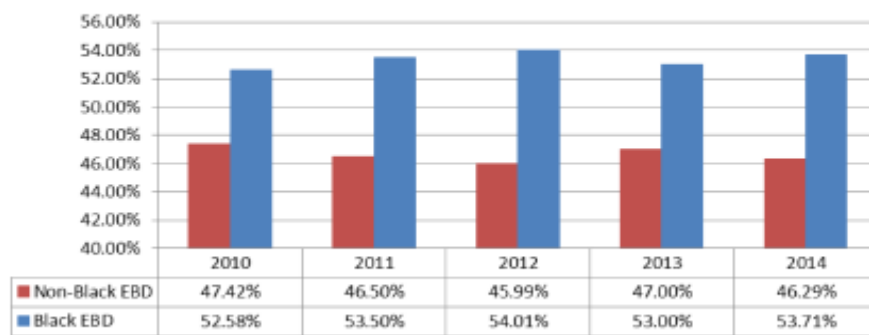
<p>Summary:</p>	<p>A school district is required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA, Part B funds for intervening services if the school district’s data indicate that students of any race are at least 3.5 times more likely to be identified as a student with an Emotional Behavioral Disability (EBD) when compared to all other races combined.</p> <p>According to the 2014 LEA Profile, the Pinellas County School District’s risk ratio for black students identified with an EBD was 3.97. This risk ratio was a decrease from the 2013 LEA Profile of 4.38.</p>
<p>Recommendation:</p>	<p>The Pinellas County School District should continue the process used to address the disproportionality related to the identification of black students with an EBD, as identified in the <i>Bridging the Gap Strategic Plan</i>.</p> <p>Additionally, the Pinellas County School District should continue to support programs through CEIS funding that are, based on data collected, shown to be effective in reducing the disproportionality related to the identification of black students with an EBD.</p>
<p>Required Action:</p>	<p>The Pinellas County School District will continue to regularly monitor and analyze schools that have determined students eligible as having an EBD during the 2014-15 school year and conduct an analysis of data trends from these schools.</p>
<p><b>Status Update 2013-14 Monitoring Visit:</b></p>	<p>The school district addressed this target area within their <i>Bridging the Gap Strategic Plan</i> which was designed to identify specific actions believed to positively impact the gap between black and non-black students. District- and school-based leaders worked with community members to determine specific goals and actions that would contribute to the narrowing of existing gaps between black and non-black students.</p> <p>The plan consisted of five goals related to several focus areas identified by the school district. Specifically, Goal 5 was used to address the concerns related to over-identification of students identified as having an EBD. Goal 5 states “reduce the number of black students being found eligible for EBD services by 2 percent by June 2015.”</p> <p>Goal 5 District Action Items and Initiatives: Primary contributing factors to reduce or eliminate the achievement gap.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the professional development on culturally responsive teaching with a focus on increasing achievement of black students, including specific content addressing the effective strategies to meet the needs of male students.</li> <li>2. Continue to monitor eligibility data monthly and add a monitoring system for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.</li> <li>3. Have multi-tiered system of supports area specialists provide data-driven training throughout the school year.</li> <li>4. Provide monthly training on Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) facilitation.</li> <li>5. Revise the EBD eligibility process to include gifted screening for all students being considered for EBD eligibility.</li> </ol>

6. Create a cross-training/meeting schedule to regularly meet and plan with multi-tiered system of support staff, social workers, psychologists and behavior specialists.
7. Add the SEDNET Coordinator to the Goal 5 Team to coordinate and plan cross training of trauma informed care.
8. Complete and implement Early Warning System to be proactive in providing services.

**Pinellas County Schools, Number of All Students and Black Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities  
2010 through 2014**



**Pinellas County Schools, EBD Students, Non-Black and Black,  
2010 through 2014**



**Source:** Pinellas County School District, May 2015

In addition to the Goal 5 Action items to reduce or eliminate the achievement gap and to reduce risk ratio for black students identified with an EBD, the district has included screening for every black student who has been referred for an initial evaluation for EBD services.

The district created a form entitled, "School-Based Team's Process for Considering EBD Eligibility." The form included eligibility steps that were divided within the form for non-ESE students and ESE students. District administration is involved throughout the eligibility process for each group of students.

The district also updated their FBA and Positive Behavioral Intervention Plan rubric which are aligned with each other and individualized for each student. This rubric is used during the eligibility process.

CEIS - Discipline	
Summary:	The Pinellas County School District was determined to have significantly disproportionate data for black students with disabilities with respect to disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions.
Recommendation :	<p>The Pinellas County School District should continue the process used to address the disparity in rates of disciplinary infractions between black and non-black students as identified in the <i>Bridging the Gap Strategic Plan</i>.</p> <p>Additionally, the Pinellas County School District should continue to support programs through CEIS funding that are, based on data collected, shown to be effective in reducing the disproportionality related to the discipline of black students with disabilities.</p>
Required Action:	The Pinellas County School District will review patterns of disciplinary actions during the 2014-15 school year, including suspensions and expulsions of black students with disabilities, and determine the impact of these results on district policies and procedures. This review will include how suspensions and expulsions compare to all other students with disabilities in the school district.
<b>Status Update 2013-14 Monitoring Visit:</b>	<p>The Pinellas County School District implemented the <i>Bridging the Gap Strategic Plan</i> to help close the achievement gap between black students and non-black students. District- and school-based leaders worked with community members to determine specific goals and actions that will contribute to the narrowing of existing gaps between black students and their non-black peers.</p> <p>The plan included several goals, one of which was related to the target area. Specifically, the goal states the district will “reduce the disparity in rates of disciplinary infractions between black and non-black students as measured by the percentage within ethnicity.”</p>

### 2013-2014 Discipline by Exceptionalities

PrimaryExceptionality	student_count	percentage
C - Orthopedically Impaired	12	0.07%
F - Speech Impaired	367	2.06%
G - Language Impaired	2,063	11.58%
H - Deaf or Hard Of Hearing	41	0.23%
I - Visually Impaired	24	0.13%
J - Emotional/Behavioral Disabl	6,389	35.86%
K - Specific Learning Disabled	5,199	29.18%
M - Hospital/Homebound	42	0.24%
P - Autism Spectrum Disorder	505	2.83%
S - Traumatic Brain Injured	16	0.09%
T - Developmentally Delayed	43	0.24%
V - Other Health Impaired	2,186	12.27%
W - Intellectual Disability	928	5.21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,815</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

<b>Total # of referrals for ESE in Dist</b>	<b>17,815</b>	<b>23.38%</b>
<b>Total # of referrals in District</b>	<b>76,185</b>	

<b>Total # of OSS for ESE in Dist (#s not days)</b>	<b>7,477</b>	<b>22.05%</b>
<b>Total # of OSS for District (#s not days)</b>	<b>33,915</b>	

**Source:** Pinellas County School District, May 2015

#### Incidents of Seclusion

**Summary:** From August 2012 through March 2013, there were 255 incidents of seclusion reported by the Pinellas County School District. From August 2013 through March 2014, the school district's number of incidents of seclusion had declined to 176.

**Required Action:** None

**Status Update  
2013-14  
Monitoring Visit:**

<b>Pinellas Seclusion Incidents</b>						
	<b>2012-13</b>		<b>2013-14</b>		<b>Difference</b>	
	<b>Number of Incidents</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Number of Incidents</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Number of Incidents</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
Pinellas	119	73	51	30	-68	-43
State	875	494	585	328	-290	-166

Data is from the first quarter (August, September and October) for the 2102-13 and the 2013-14 school years

**Source:** FDOE, Restraint and Seclusion Database

## 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 Pinellas County School District.

### School Selection

After reviewing district data related to incidents of seclusion, graduation rates, least restrictive environment, coordinated early intervening services related to disproportionate removal of black students with disabilities (through In-School Suspension (ISS), Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) and expulsion) and disproportionate representation of black students identified as having an EBD, the SST members determined to include the following schools for the 2014-15 on-site monitoring and assistance process:

- Gulf Coast Academy
- Largo High School
- Pinellas Park High School
- Calvin Hunsinger School
- Richard Sanders School
- Paul B. Stephens School
- Azalea Middle School

### Incidents of Seclusion

According to the FDOE’s restraint and seclusion database, the Pinellas County School District has decreased the number of incidents of seclusion over the past three years. However, the total percentage of students with disabilities secluded in Pinellas County School District for the 2014-15 school year is .56 percent while the state average is .20 percent.

### Incidents of Seclusion for Pinellas County School District

2012- 2013 (August - July)		2013-2014 (August - July)		2014- 2015 (August - May)	
Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students
<b>364</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>75</b>

Source: FDOE, Restraint and Seclusion Database

### Graduation Rates

Federal Uniform High School Graduation Rate: Beginning with the 2010-11 school year, the U.S. Department of Education adopted a new graduation rate calculation. 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 into the number of standard diploma graduates from the same group.

<b>Federal Graduation Rate for Students with Disabilities</b>				
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Total Federal Graduation Rate for Pinellas	35%	42%	40%	49%
State Rate	44%	48%	52%	55%
<b>Source:</b> FDOE, Bureau of PK-20 Education Reporting and Accessibility				

<b>2013-14 Graduation Data by Racial or Ethnic Category</b>							
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
Pinellas Students with Disabilities	53%	45%	51%				40%
All Pinellas students	81%	61%	72%	87%	70%	63%	75%
State	59%	45%	59%	64%	46%	50%	54%
<b>Source:</b> FDOE, Bureau of PK-20 Education Reporting and Accessibility Blank cells represent values fewer than 30 but greater than 0							

### **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

Educational environments percentages include the number of students with disabilities ages six through 21 in a regular class, a resource room, a separate class and other separate environment, divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages six through 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.

**Pinellas County School District  
Educational Environments – Comparison with State Percentages**

School Year	Regular Class Placement		Resource Room Placement		Separate Class Placement		Other Separate Environment	
	State	District	State	District	State	District	State	District
2014-15	74%	71%	8.7%	7%	12.9%	13.9%	3.9%	8.5%
2013-14	71%	69%	10%	9%	15%	13%	4%	9%
2012-13	71%	69%	11%	9%	14%	13%	4%	9%
2011-12	69%	69%	12%	9%	15%	15%	4%	8%

**Source:** FDOE, 2014 LEA Profile

After reviewing data for 2014-15 and comparing state percentages to the district's educational environments' percentages, the SST determined that LRE would not be a focus of concern during the 2014-15 on-site visit.

**CEIS**

Districts are required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA funds for CEIS if the following criteria are met:

- Incidents of removal of students with disabilities through ISS, OSS, or expulsion for students with disabilities of any given race are at least 3.5 more likely to occur when compared to all other races combined (CEIS discipline)
- Students of any race are at least 3.5 times more likely to be identified as disabled compared to all other races combined (CEIS over-identification)

**CEIS - Discipline**

The school district's 2013-14 data indicated that the incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS, or expulsion was 3.82 times more likely to occur when compared to students with disabilities of all other races. This risk ratio is a decrease from the risk ratio of 4.37 from the 2012-13 school year.

Pinellas County School District CEIS - Discipline Risk Ratio						
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
0.35	3.82	0.55	0.16	0.99		1.32

**Source:** Survey 5, Student Demographic, Exceptional Student, and Student Discipline data files  
Blank cells represent values fewer than 30 but greater than 0.



## **CEIS - Over-identification**

The school district's risk ratio of CEIS over-identification of black students with an EBD using 2013-14 data, had decreased to 3.97, from the previous year's risk ratio of 4.38. However, in 2014-15, black students in the school district were **4.02** times more likely to be identified as having an EBD compared to all other races combined.

The Pinellas County School District participated in phase three of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance on May 11-12, 2015.

## **District and School-Level Administrators' Focus Groups**

District and school-level administrators participated in focus groups. Questions during the focus groups varied depending on the participants of the activities. The questions were related to: educational environments, seclusion, discipline practices, and disproportionality of black students identified with an EBD. The administrators' comments included the following information:

- Some high school administrators indicated that they used the resource of Check and Connect as an intervention to support students at risk of not graduating.
- Several administrators agreed that articulation processes for students transitioning between middle and high school were in place; however, the processes could be improved.
- Most administrators agreed that the cohort data provided by the district has been helpful with determining which students need immediate attention regarding graduation.
- Some schools have provided Algebra boot camps for students who had not passed the course.
- Several agreed that the majority of school referrals come from incidents that involve students fighting, use of profanity toward adults, and disrespect towards adults.
- In at least one school, the administrators reported that their school developed a behavioral color-coded system that included rewards and consequences. The staff perceived that this was a positive approach to improve students' behaviors.
- Several school administrators indicated that the seclusion incidents had decreased at their schools.
- Some schools provided mentoring services at their school that included all of their staff members' participation.

## **Teachers' Interviews**

Teachers participated in school interviews. Questions during the interviews varied depending on the participants of the activities. The questions were related to: educational environments, seclusion, discipline practices, and disproportionality of black students identified with an EBD. The comments included the following information:

- One of the teachers reported that environmental factors of the students contributed to the school district's high risk ratio of black students being disciplined.
- It was stated that students have a lot of "anger" and have been taught that fighting is an acceptable behavior to address their issues.
- The district provided an Attendance Specialist at one of the schools, which has helped improve the attendance issues within the school.
- The color-coded behavioral system was described. A teacher discussed that the blue level was considered the "best level." However, a student who was on an orange level must do community enrichment, which consisted of a student picking up trash at school.
- It was reported that students respond well to praise and perhaps the reason is that some students may not receive this type of encouragement at home.
- The teachers reported that PBS has been more evident and has been utilized more this year than in previous years.

## **Student Focus Group**

Students participated in a focus group. Questions during the focus group were related to: IEP team meetings and parental participation, career and technical education, academics, extracurricular activities, state-wide assessments, diploma options, dropout, and suspension and expulsion. The students' comments included the following information:

- The students, who expressed that they had frequent behaviors which resulted in ISS or OSS, perceived that the behavioral color-coded system was punitive. These students reported that incentives were unattainable, and they did not "buy-in" to the behavioral color-coded system.
- Most of the students appreciated the Campus Monitors, and the role they played in deescalating conflict and building rapport with students.
- Some of the students indicated that they were not aware they had an individual educational plan.
- Instructional support for some of the students was provided through co-teaching. Some of the students reported that when an additional teacher was in the classroom, the instructional information was conflicting.
- Overall, the students understood that they had to take personal responsibility for their behaviors. However, the students indicated that behaving in a positive manner was difficult when the adults at the school initiate conflict by how the adults communicate with the students.

## **Commendations**

1. The district-level staff has analyzed their data and provided school-specific data to school administrators. The district-level staff also provided school administrators with specific guidance and instructions on how to use the data to improve in their school's areas of concerns regarding their students.
2. The school district has improved their data in each of the target areas related to the 2013-14 ESE monitoring and assistance process.
3. Within the district, 28 schools have been receiving support through the University of South Florida's PBS:MTSS Project.
4. The district made changes to their initial evaluation process for students suspected of having an EBD which involved the process of screening the students for eligibility to receive services for students identified as being gifted. Three of the students who were referred during the 2014-15 school year have qualified for gifted services.
5. The district created a Functional Behavioral Assessment and Positive Behavior Quality Indicator Rubric to increase the quality of a Behavioral Intervention Plan.
6. In an effort to improve the relationship between schools and their community, the school district partnered with the local health department and built a Health Clinic at a school to provide health care to students and their families.

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

The school district's 2013-14 ESE Monitoring and Assistance action plan was reviewed by bureau staff. Based on the review of the action plan and the activities conducted during the 2014-15 on-site visit, the district's next steps have been identified below to improve in the target areas that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities:

<b>Next Steps</b>													
<b>Incidents of Seclusion</b>													
Summary	<p>Between August 2014 and October 2014, there were 95 incidents of seclusion reported by the Pinellas County School District. From November 2014 through January 2015, the school district's number of incidents of seclusion was 45.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>2011-12</th> <th>2012-13</th> <th>2013-14</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Number of incidents</td> <td>587</td> <td>364</td> <td>263</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of students</td> <td>194</td> <td>161</td> <td>116</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Source:</b> FDOE, BEESS data</p>	Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Number of incidents	587	364	263	Number of students	194	161	116
Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14										
Number of incidents	587	364	263										
Number of students	194	161	116										
Recommendation	The Pinellas County School District should continue to use a comprehensive approach in decreasing the number of seclusion incidents. Data related to seclusion should continue to be reviewed and analyzed at least monthly.												
Required Action	N/A												
<b>Graduation Rates</b>													
Summary	According to the FDOE, Bureau of PK-20 Education Reporting and Accessibility, the Pinellas County School District's graduation rate has increased from 40 percent during the 2012-13 school year to 49 percent during the 2013-14 school year. The district should continue working to increase their graduation rate as the state rate for the 2013-14 school year was 55 percent.												
Recommendation	The Pinellas County School District shall consider working with Project 10, to assist the district with their continued effort of increasing their graduation rates.												
Required Action	N/A												
<b>CEIS - Discipline</b>													
Summary	<p>Florida has chosen 3.5 as its definition of significant disproportionality for CEIS.</p> <p>In Pinellas County, incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS, or expulsion are 3.82 times more likely to occur when compared to all other races combined. (Source: Final Survey 5 data, 2013-14)</p> <p>While black students make up 25 percent of the population of students with disabilities, they account for 55 percent of the incidents of ISS, OSS, and expulsion. (Source: Preliminary Survey 3 data, 2014-15)</p>												
Recommendation:	The Pinellas County School District should continue to include the assistance of the MTSS:PBS Project, in an effort to improve district-wide												

<b>Next Steps</b>	
	<p>discipline and behavioral concerns and consider expanding the assistance to more schools within the district.</p> <p>It is recommended that the district define more clearly what behaviors warrant ISS, OSS, or expulsion for school administrators district-wide. This will assist school administrators in distributing consequences that are interpreted and carried out consistently across races and schools.</p> <p>As the district continues to analyze and distribute district-wide data to school administrators, the district should consider comparing incident data for students without disabilities to the data for students with disabilities to see where discrepancies occur and to follow up with problem-solving.</p> <p>It is recommended that the district review the discipline practices and positive behavior supports of each school at least twice a year, to ensure that the practices on the school level are consistent with the district-wide practices and monitored for the effectiveness of programs.</p>
Required Action:	<p>The Pinellas County School District will disaggregate discipline incident data in a form similar to that used in the CEIS - Discipline calculation in order to target schools where black students with disabilities are disproportionately receiving referrals resulting in ISS, OSS, and expulsion when compared to students with disabilities of all other races. Data will be reviewed with appropriate district and school staff.</p> <p>This review will include how discipline referrals resulting in ISS, OSS, and expulsion are being distributed among all races of students with disabilities. The school district will provide the bureau with the data which was reviewed, a narrative explaining the data, and how the district's discipline practices may have contributed to the data results. The district will submit this information to the district's liaison <b>no later than May 6, 2016</b>.</p>
<b>CEIS- Over-identification, Black, EBD</b>	
Summary:	<p>Florida has chosen 3.5 as its definition of significant disproportionality for CEIS.</p> <p>In Pinellas, black students are 4.02 times more likely to be identified as having an EBD compared to all other races combined.</p>
Recommendation:	<p>It is recommended that the Pinellas County School District consider looking at whether existing students with an EBD are appropriately placed and whether the students are in need of special education services.</p> <p>The district should consider adding steps to identify students with an EBD who may be demonstrating persistent and consistent emotional or behavioral responses that adversely affect performance in the educational environment.</p>

<b>Next Steps</b>	
	The district should consider strengthening Tier 2 supports for students having behavioral issues. This will involve following through on the district's planned training opportunities during the summer of 2015.
Required Action	<p>The Pinellas County School District will continue to monitor and analyze data from schools that have determined students eligible as having an EBD. In addition, the district will monitor data for all students eligible as having an EBD, not just those being newly identified. The data will capture any declines that may have occurred due to students being dismissed or placed in another exceptional student education program. The district will submit evidence of this data and a narrative explaining the district's practices that resulted in the data. This documentation must be submitted to the district's liaison <b>no later than May 6, 2016.</b></p> <p>The district will complete an MTSS district survey and a Self-Assessment of MTSS or Success Gaps with selected schools (facilitated by PS:Rtl). The district will submit evidence of this to the district's liaison <b>no later than May 6, 2016.</b></p>
<b>Phase 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process</b>	
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.

## 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://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
3. The technical assistance paper entitled **Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Restraint and Seclusion with Students with Disabilities**, dated October 14, 2011, may be accessed at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-6212/dps-2011-165.pdf>. This document provides guidance regarding the use, documenting, reporting and monitoring of restraint and seclusion with students with disabilities in school districts, including (a) when restraint or seclusion might be used, (b) considerations when selecting a training program for restraint, (c) what should be documented, (d) parent notification and reporting, and (e) monitoring use. It also contains information about s. 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities.
4. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released **School Discipline Guidance** in the January 2014, **Volume 4, Issue 1 of the Office of Special Education Programs Monthly Update**. This package will assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. The resource documents listed below are included in the package, and are available at <http://www.ed.gov/school-discipline>.
  - **Dear Colleague** guidance letter on civil rights and discipline
  - **Guiding Principles** document that draws from emerging research and best practices
  - **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources** that indexes federal technical assistance and other resources
  - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations** that catalogue state laws and regulations related to school discipline

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

**2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance  
State Support Team for the Pinellas County School District**

**Bureau of Exceptional Education  
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**Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services  
Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

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

BEESS	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BIP	Behavioral intervention plan
BPIE	Best Practices for Inclusive Education
CARD	Center for Autism and Related Disorders
CEIS	Coordinated early intervening services
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DRM	Dispute Resolution and Monitoring
EBD	Emotional behavioral disability
ESE	Exceptional student education
FBA	Functional behavioral assessment
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
ISS	In-school-suspension
LEA	Local educational agency
LRE	Least restrictive environment
MTSS	Multi-tiered system of support
OSS	Out-of-school suspension
PAADS	Program Accountability Assessment and Data Systems
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PBS:MTSS	Positive Behavior Support: Multi-Tiered System of Supports
PS:RtI	Problem-Solving: Response to Intervention
SEDNET	Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities
SPDG	State Personnel Development Grant
SPP	State Performance Plan
SSSP	Student Support Services Project
SST	State Support Team





Pam Stewart, Commissioner

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