

**2015-16 Exceptional Student Education  
Monitoring and Assistance  
On-Site Visit Report**

---

**Miami-Dade County School District  
February 9-11, 2016**



This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), Division of K-12 Public Schools, Florida Department of Education (FDOE), and is available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>. For information on available resources, contact the BEESS Resource and Information Center (BRIC).

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

Bureau website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

Email: [BRIC@fldoe.org](mailto:BRIC@fldoe.org)

Telephone: 850-245-0475

Fax: 850-245-0987



**State Board of Education**

Marva Johnson, *Chair*  
John R. Padget, *Vice Chair*  
*Members*  
Gary Chartrand  
Tom Grady  
Rebecca Fishman Lipsey  
Michael Olenick  
Andy Tuck

**Pam Stewart**  
Commissioner of Education

November 28, 2016

Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent  
Miami-Dade County School District  
1450 NE Second Avenue #912  
Miami, Florida 33132-1308

Dear Superintendent Carvalho:

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) is pleased to provide you with the 2015-16 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Miami-Dade 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 February 9-11, 2016. Those information sources included interviews with district and school staff, local educational agency profiles, and an action-planning and problem-solving process.

The Miami-Dade County School District was selected for an on-site visit for the following focus areas related to students with disabilities: discipline (4A and 4B), least restrictive environment and transition individual educational plans aligned with postsecondary outcomes. The on-site visit was conducted by a state support team (SST) that included BEESS staff and discretionary project staff.

The 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those State Performance Plan indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for coordinated early intervening services and those indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities. Additionally, the process focuses on a shift from ESE compliance to outcomes to prepare all students for college, career and life 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.

Ms. Ava Goldman, Administrative Director of ESE, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for and throughout the on-site 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/mon-home.asp>.

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

Superintendent Carvalho  
November 28, 2016  
Page Two

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Miami-Dade 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Monica Verra-Tirado". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a thin black rectangular border.

Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Chief

Enclosure

cc: Ava Goldman  
Heidi Metcalf  
Leanne Grillot

**2015-16 Exceptional Student Education  
Monitoring and Assistance  
On-Site Visit Report**

**Miami-Dade County School District**

**February 9-11, 2016**

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

## Table of Contents

Authority.....	1
Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance Process .....	1
Background Information.....	1
School Selection.....	2
On-Site Activities.....	3
On-Site Visit Team .....	3
Data Collection .....	3
Status Update for the 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance Visit .....	4
2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Results.....	7
Discipline – 4A.....	7
Discipline – 4B.....	7
Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment) .....	8
Transition Individual Educational Plans Aligned with Postsecondary Outcomes .....	8
Interviews Conducted.....	9
Administrator Focus Groups .....	9
Teacher Focus Groups.....	9
Student Focus Groups.....	10
School Walk-Through Debriefings .....	10
Commendations.....	10
2015-16 Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps .....	11
Technical Assistance .....	14
State Support Team for Miami-Dade County School District .....	15

## **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]). BEESS 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, BEESS examines records and ESE services, evaluates procedures, provides information and assistance to school districts and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. The monitoring system is designed to facilitate improved educational outcomes for students while ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

Under 34 CFR §300.646(b)(2), if a state identifies significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity in a local educational agency (LEA) with respect to the identification of children as children with disabilities, the identification of children in specific disability categories, the placement of children with disabilities in particular educational settings or the taking of disciplinary actions, the LEA must use the maximum amount (15 percent) of funds allowable for comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (CEIS) for children in the LEA who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic or behavioral supports in order to succeed in a general education environment. These children should include particularly, but not exclusively, children in those groups that were significantly over-identified.

Section 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities, establishes documentation, reporting and monitoring requirements for districts regarding the use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities. It also requires districts to have policies and procedures in place that govern parent notification, incident reporting, data collection and monitoring the use of restraint or seclusion for students with disabilities. As required, FDOE has established district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of restraint and seclusion. These standards are included in each district's Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures (SP&P) document.

## **ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process**

### **Background Information**

The 2015-16 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 more 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 more 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 6 through 21:
  - A. In the regular class 80 percent or more of the day
  - B. In 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 is composed of planning activities that occur in advance of the initial on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 is the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST). **The initial on-site visit was September 29-October 2, 2104.**
- Phase 3 is follow-up and post-initial visit activities, which 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 is 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 September 21, 2015, the superintendent of the Miami-Dade County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: discipline (4A and 4B), least restrictive environment (LRE) and transition IEPs aligned with postsecondary outcomes.

### **School Selection**

Upon review of the district's discipline and LRE data, it was determined that the monitoring and assistance process would involve the following schools for school-level administrator, teacher and student focus groups, and school walk-through debriefings:

- Homestead Senior High School
- Miami Norland Senior High School
- Richmond Heights Middle School

## **On-Site Activities**

### **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, State Director for Special Education, Bureau Chief
- Leanne Grillot, Educational Program Director, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
- Bethany Mathers, Portal to Exceptional Education Resources (PEER): Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) Consultant, Student Support Services (SSS)
- Curtis Jenkins, School Counseling Consultant, SSS
- Jerry Brown, Program Specialist, DRM

#### **FDOE, BEESS Discretionary Projects**

- Kelly Justice, Problem Solving Facilitator, Problem Solving: Response to Intervention (PS:Rtl)
- Stephanie Martinez, Technical Assistance Specialist, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Alina Rodriguez, Project Manager, Multiagency for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities
- Barbara Krakower, Facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
- JaSheena Ekhaton, Facilitator, FIN-South
- Gwen Lipscomb, Program Specialist, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)
- Tony Dutra, Region 5 Technology Coordinator, PS:Rtl
- Kay Ratzlaff, Coordinator of Instructional Resource Services, Florida Instructional Materials Center for Visually Impaired
- Margaret Sullivan, Director, State Personnel Development Grant

### **Data Collection**

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Review of recent data
- Welcome session with district and school-level staff – multiple participants
- School-level administrator focus groups – 20 participants
- Teacher focus groups – 21 participants
- Student focus groups – 29 participants
- School walk-through debriefings – multiple classrooms
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – multiple participants

The district completed the Best Practices for Inclusive Education (BPIE) assessment with FIN facilitators on September 24, 2013. The services plan included the following goals:

- Goal 1: During the 2015-2016 school year, FIN will support Miami-Dade County Public Schools to increase students with disabilities spending 80 percent or more of the day with their nondisabled peers from 52 to 55 percent.
- Goal 2: By the end of the 2015-2016 school year, FIN and additional discretionary projects

will support the District ESE Leadership Team in providing professional development offerings and technical assistance to at least 80 percent of the 31 targeted schools to support outcomes in LRE and achievement.

**Status Update for the 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance Visit**

The following information is taken from the **2014-15 on-site monitoring** report. A status update to the required actions and recommendations has been added for each area listed.

<b>Next Steps</b>	
<b>Discipline – 4A</b>	
Summary	When compared to nondisabled students, students with disabilities in the district were 3.00 times more likely to be suspended or expelled for more than 10 days. The 2012-13 discipline data for 4A was <b>3.18</b> with a state rate of 1.21. The 2013-14 discipline data for 4A was <b>3.24</b> with a state rate of 1.43, which was an increase from the prior year.
Recommendations	N/A
Required Actions	The district will review patterns of disciplinary actions for the 2014-15 school year, including suspensions and expulsions of students with disabilities, and determine the effects of these results on district policies and procedures. This review will include how suspensions and expulsions of students with disabilities compare to all other students in the school district. The results of this review will be submitted to the district’s BEESS liaison no later than <b>October 30, 2015</b> .
<b>Status Update</b>	<p>On October 28, 2015, a review of the district’s disciplinary patterns was provided to the bureau to meet the required actions due October 30, 2015, for indicators 4A and 4B. All schools showed a decrease in the number of in-school suspensions and the district was on target to meet its goal. Twenty-two of 31 schools have been trained by PBIS and those 22 schools are creating procedures and utilizing behavioral strategies to improve school climate and reduce discipline referrals.</p> <p>In addition, the following information was provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In December 2014, the district developed a two-year multi-tiered support plan.</li> <li>• In January 2015, this plan was launched at 17 targeted high schools selected based on suspension and inclusion data. The launch included meetings with regional directors and school administrators.</li> <li>• From April to November 2015, school-based leadership teams conducted meetings to review discipline data and create school-level action plans based on the data. Professional development was the main component of the follow-up support provided to the 17 schools by the district’s ESE department.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In June 2015, suspension and disproportionality training for assistant principals was provided at the ESE Boot Camp.</li> <li>• In September 2015, PBIS provided professional development for disproportionality and Response to Intervention: Behavior Data Base training to behavior management teachers and school social workers.</li> <li>• From September to November 2015, PBIS Tier 1 team trainings were provided for 11 high schools and nine elementary and kindergarten through Grade 8 schools.</li> <li>• From October to December 2015, two-day functional behavioral assessment trainings were conducted.</li> </ul>
<b>Discipline – 4B</b>	
Summary	The district was determined to have significant disproportionate data for black students with disabilities with respect to disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions for more than 10 days as compared to students of all other races. The 2012-13 risk ratio for 4B was <b>7.37</b> , while the state rate was 2.49. The 2013-14 risk ratio data for 4B was <b>7.63</b> , while the state rate was 2.92, which was an increase from the prior year.
Recommendations	N/A
Required Actions	The district will review patterns of disciplinary actions for the 2014-15 school year, including suspensions and expulsions of black students with disabilities, and determine the effect of these results on district policies and procedures. This review will include how suspensions and expulsions of black students with disabilities compare to students with disabilities of all other races. The results of this review will be submitted to BEESS no later than <b>October 30, 2015</b> .
Status Update	See Status Update for Discipline – 4A.
<b>Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)</b>	
Summary	Based on the data obtained before and during the district's on-site monitoring visit, the school district was below the enrollment group and state averages for regular class placement for the 2011-12 to 2013-14 school years. The 2013-14 LRE data for regular class placement was 50.1 percent, while the state rate was 71.3 percent.
Recommendations	<p>Pursuant to s. 1003.57, F.S., once every three years, each school district and school shall complete a BPIE assessment with a FIN facilitator and include the results of the BPIE assessment and all planned short-term and long-term improvement efforts in the school district's SP&amp;P. The 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>The district should review districtwide services to students with disabilities to ensure that there are procedures in place that increase a more uniform distribution of special programs across schools and</p>

	<p>regions to more closely mirror the district's percentage of students with disabilities.</p> <p>The district completed the BPIE process during the 2013-14 school year. In collaboration with FIN and other stakeholders, the district should continue with the implementation of the action plan developed as the result of the BPIE. A FIN facilitator is available to assist the district to provide support to implement their plan (<a href="http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/">http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/</a>).</p>
<p>Required Actions</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Status Update</b></p>	<p>On December 11, 2015, the district provided BEESS with documentation that indicated, based on baseline data for September and November 2015, 51 percent of the schools (16) have increased their inclusion rate. Out of these 16 schools, three schools met the target stated in the action plan. There is a greater awareness by leadership teams regarding the importance of LRE at more than half of the high schools in the district.</p> <p>In addition, the following information was provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On December 3, 2014, there was a follow-up meeting by PS:Rtl to continue problem solving related to the initial on-site visit.</li> <li>• In January 2015, Accommodations and Access to General Education Curriculum training was conducted for all district reading coaches.</li> <li>• From April to November 2015, Best Practices for Inclusion training was provided based on data to all faculties at seven high schools, two middle schools and one elementary school.</li> <li>• On July 27, 2015, the district conducted a FIN services plan meeting with FIN, Project 10, PS:Rtl, and district staffing specialists.</li> <li>• In November 2015, technology training was provided to the district's staffing specialists by FIN, Project 10 and PS:Rtl.</li> <li>• On September 8, 2016, the district completed their new triennial BPIE assessment. FIN facilitators will meet with district leadership to develop a new services plan that will reflect the prioritized indicators.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phases 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process</b></p>	
<p>Summary</p>	<p>Additional action planning and problem solving for other priorities for the district have been scheduled by the assigned SST liaison for the school district and the ESE director.</p> <p>The SST, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plans and determine additional next steps, as appropriate. The results of this evaluation will be submitted to BEESS by December 11, 2015.</p>

<b>Status Update</b>	On December 11, 2015, the district provided BEESS with documentation that included an action plan, a summary of the effectiveness of the action plan, and next steps for discipline 4A and 4B, and LRE.
----------------------	---

**2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Results**

During the on-site visit the district reported launching an enhanced approach to progressive discipline through the Rethinking Discipline initiative in July 2015. This initiative focused on eliminating OSS by providing additional counselor positions (particularly at primary grade levels) as well as numerous district program options that school sites can access to address student disciplinary infractions.

One of the new program options embedded in the Rethinking Discipline initiative is the Student Success Centers (SSCs). Students are referred to the SSCs only for specific disciplinary infractions, based on the district’s code of student conduct, and with parental consent. At the SSCs, the students receive daily instruction in all subject areas, individual and group counseling with a certified counselor, and wraparound services provided through partnerships with community-based organizations. Parents of participating students are engaged through weekly parent workshops.

The following data are related to the focus areas and activities for the 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit for Miami-Dade County School District.

**Discipline – 4A**

Discipline indicator 4A identifies the risk of students with disabilities being suspended or expelled for more than 10 days as compared to their nondisabled peers. A risk ratio of 2.0 would mean that students with disabilities are twice as likely to be suspended or expelled for more than 10 days compared to their nondisabled peers. When compared to nondisabled students, students with disabilities in the district were **3.00** times more likely to be suspended or expelled for more than 10 days.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Miami-Dade	<b>3.14</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>3.00</b>
State	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.33</b>

**Discipline – 4B**

Discipline risk ratios for students with disabilities are calculated by first dividing the number of students with disabilities from a specific racial or ethnic group who received out-of-school suspensions (OSSs) or expulsions totaling more than 10 days, by the total-year enrollment of students with disabilities from the same racial or ethnic group. Second, the number of all nondisabled students who received OSSs or expulsions totaling more than 10 days is divided by the total number of nondisabled students. The risk ratio is calculated by dividing the result of the first step by the result of the second step. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that students with disabilities of a given race are no more likely to be suspended or expelled than all nondisabled

students. For the 2014-15 school year, students with disabilities in the district whose race is black are **6.75** times more likely to be suspended or expelled than all nondisabled students.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Miami-Dade	<b>6.71</b>	<b>7.37</b>	<b>7.61</b>	<b>6.75</b>
State	<b>2.67</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.92</b>	<b>2.72</b>

**Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)**

To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are to be educated with nondisabled students. These LRE data are calculated by dividing the number of students with disabilities aged 6 through 21 served in the regular class for 80 percent or more of the day, by the total number of students with disabilities aged 6 through 21 reported in October (survey 2). These data do not include parentally placed private school students or students served in Florida county jails, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice facilities or Florida Department of Corrections. The district’s percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class is below the state rate.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Miami-Dade	<b>52.0%</b>	<b>50.1%</b>	<b>73.5%*</b>	<b>49.6%</b>
State	<b>70.7%</b>	<b>71.3%</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>73.0%</b>

\*BEESS received confirmation from the district that the data were reported incorrectly and the district was unable to correct the data before the clarification period ended. Although the district reported to BEESS that they identified the error, the district was unable to determine the actual rate from the prior year.

**Transition Individual Educational Plans Aligned with Postsecondary Outcomes**

Each year districts are required to complete web-based protocols on the BEESS General Supervision website. Correction of noncompliance and corrective action plans are reported by districts and tracked via the website. One of the required protocols is SPP 13 – Secondary Transition for Students with Disabilities (Age 16). This protocol is comprised of 16 standards. The last standard (T16-16) includes all the requirements for a transition IEP to be compliant.

During the 2013-14 self-assessment process, 86.7 percent of student records entered by the district had findings of noncompliance for standard T16-16, and during the 2014-15 self-assessment process, the findings of noncompliance for standard T16-16 were 60 percent. Results of the 2015-16 self assessment indicate that there were no findings of noncompliance for standard T16-16.

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Percentage of Noncompliance for Standard T16-16	<b>86.7%</b>	<b>60.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

## **Interviews Conducted**

### **Administrator Focus Groups**

Members of the SST conducted interviews with administrative staff members from Homestead Senior High School, Miami Norland Senior High School and Richmond Heights Middle School regarding discipline 4A and 4B, and LRE.

Themes that emerged from the administrator focus groups included the following:

- At some schools, there is concern for students with disabilities being served in separate classes for intensive reading and math.
- Some students are scheduled in general education classes based on the IEP team's recommendation that they would be successful beginning with one or two classes at a time.
- Co-teaching is a placement option, but funding for teacher positions may be perceived as a barrier.
- Research on co-teaching to help reduce the number of students in resource rooms was suggested.
- Many students spend a large amount of time in a resource-room setting instead of in a separate classroom. Students enrolled in access courses are primarily placed in self-contained classrooms.
- The special education facilitator plays a major role in creating the master schedule for students with disabilities.
- At one school, the principal started a schoolwide positive behavior initiative to reward students for academic and behavioral achievements.
- One principal reported a focus on hiring teachers that are committed to providing rigorous academic instruction to increase student outcomes.
- Students with and without an IEP can attend Saturday school.
- Incentives are provided for students that participate in Saturday school on a consistent basis, such as Busch Gardens trips, tickets to Miami Dolphins football games or Miami Marlins baseball games, and pizza parties.
- Schools collaborate with outside organizations that provide in-class tutoring to students (such as City Year and Diploma Now).

### **Teacher Focus Groups**

Members of the SST conducted interviews with teachers from Homestead Senior High School, Miami Norland Senior High School and Richmond Heights Middle School regarding discipline 4A and 4B, and LRE.

Themes that emerged from the teacher focus groups included the following:

- The same strategies and materials are being used for instructing nondisabled students as students with disabilities enrolled in identical courses.
- At one school, teachers are unsure why students with disabilities are being excluded from general education classrooms.
- At some schools, teachers reported that students with disabilities are taught by the same teacher as students without disabilities and the classes consist of a combination of students with and without disabilities and at other schools, these same courses include only students with disabilities.

- At another school, teachers indicated that all students with disabilities were included in all courses.
- Some schools collaborate with outside organizations to provide in-class tutoring for students in the general education setting only.
- When students return from the SSCs they often do not have class work completed.
- Students who participate in Saturday school are very motivated and actively engaged in instruction.
- Everyone is focused on the success of all students.

### **Student Focus Groups**

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with students from Homestead Senior High School, Miami Norland Senior High School and Richmond Heights Middle School. The students were asked to share their perspectives on topics such as courses, career goals, assistance received to prepare for life after high school, causes of dropout, disciplinary issues and additional resources or services needed.

Comments from the student focus groups included the following:

- All the students have at least one teacher they can talk to about goals after high school.
- The students feel safe in school.
- Students report that they don't think about dropping out of school.
- The tutors from City Year are very supportive.
- At some schools, students report that they are a part of their IEP meetings and at other schools, the students do not believe they are a part of their IEP meetings.
- Almost all the students would like to spend more time in general education.
- Some students have access to computers but have relatively little knowledge of the accommodation features on the computers.

### **School Walk-Through Debriefings**

Members of the SST conducted school walk-through debriefings at Miami Norland Senior High School and Richmond Heights Middle School.

Observations from the school walk-through debriefings included the following:

- Students were actively engaged in lessons utilizing technology.
- Classrooms were conducive to learning.
- Rules and expectations were posted in classrooms and in hallways.
- Student activities were in a variety of groups, e.g., individual work, and small- and whole-group instruction.
- Some teachers were creatively using student devices to engage the learner (e.g., iPods, digital phones and tablets)
- Teacher support to students with disabilities was observed during large-group activities.

### **Commendations**

1. The district's 2014-15 federal uniform high school graduation rate for students with disabilities (four-year cohort) was 66 percent, which exceeded the state rate of 57 percent.
2. The district's 2014-15 standard diploma graduation rate for students with disabilities (fifth-sixth- and seventh-year cohort) was 63 percent, which exceeded the state rate of 62 percent.

3. Thirty-seven percent of youth exiting high school in the 2013-14 school year from the district, who had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, were enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school, which exceeds the state rate of 29 percent.
4. Results of the 2015-16 self assessment indicate there were no findings of noncompliance for standard T16-16, which are transition goals on the IEPs aligned with postsecondary outcomes.

**2015-16 Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps**

<b>Next Steps</b>	
<b>Discipline – 4A</b>	
Summary	<p>During the 2014-15 school year, students with IEPs were <b>3.00</b> times more likely to be suspended or expelled for more than 10 days, when compared to their nondisabled peers. The rate for the 2014-15 school year decreased from the 2013-14 rate of <b>3.24</b>.</p> <p>The district has launched a new program where students are referred to the SSCs only for specific disciplinary infractions, based on the district’s code of student conduct, with parental consent. At the SSCs, the students receive daily instruction in all subject areas, individual and group counseling with a certified counselor, wraparound services provided through partnerships with community-based organizations.</p> <p>For students with disabilities, repeat removals from a student’s educational placement (i.e., in-school suspension, referral to the SSCs) may constitute a pattern of removals that would necessitate a Manifestation Determination meeting as required under 34 CFR §300.530(e). To ensure compliance with federal regulations, the district must continue to monitor and track suspension and expulsion data for students with IEPs that are referred to the SSCs, whether these students report to their assigned location or not.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that district staff monitor students’ transitions back and forth between their home schools and their assigned SSCs to ensure that students are completing assigned work.</p> <p>The district emphasized that students are offered educational services at the SSCs, therefore, the district should monitor student progress to ensure that students are receiving educational services.</p> <p>The district should continue to conduct PBIS Tier 1 training in schools.</p>
Required Actions	<p>The district must provide the policies and procedures for convening a Manifestation Determination meeting when students with disabilities have been referred to the SSCs for more than 10 days. The district must provide this information to the district’s BEESS liaison via <a href="mailto:BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org">BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org</a> by <b>December 14, 2016</b>.</p>

<b>Discipline – 4B</b>	
Summary	The district’s 2014-15 4B discipline rate revealed that black students with disabilities are <b>6.75</b> times more likely to be suspended or expelled as all nondisabled students. This is a decrease from the 2013-14 4B discipline rate of <b>7.61</b> .
Recommendations	See Discipline – 4A
Required Actions	<p>The district must review the 4B data quarterly and engage in data-based problem solving focusing on disproportionality in discipline.</p> <p>The quarterly 4B data and the summary of the problem solving activities must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison via <a href="mailto:BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org">BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org</a> by the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>December 14, 2016</b></li> <li>• <b>January 25, 2017</b></li> <li>• <b>March 17, 2017</b></li> </ul>
<b>Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)</b>	
Summary	The district’s percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class for the 2014-15 school year was reported at 73.5 percent, with a state rate of 74.4 percent. Upon consultation with the district, it was determined that the district had reported the data incorrectly. The district estimated that their regular class placement was closer to the 2013-14 data of 50.1 percent. The 2015-16 LRE data was 49.6 percent, which is below the state rate of 73 percent, but consistent with what the district considered to be accurate.
Recommendations	It is recommended that the district continue to work with FIN, Technology and Learning Connections for Assistive Technology, and FDLRS in conducting professional development for district and school-level staff, related to scheduling, general education classroom supports, and implementation of universal design for learning and differentiated instruction.
Required Actions	<p>A copy of the district’s new BPIE, completed on September 8, 2016, must be provided to BEESS no later than <b>November 30, 2016</b>. In addition, the quarterly school-level inclusion data and a summary of the problem solving activities related to the 31 targeted schools, selected by the district, must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison via <a href="mailto:BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org">BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org</a> by the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>December 14, 2016</b></li> <li>• <b>January 25, 2017</b></li> <li>• <b>March 17, 2017</b></li> </ul>

<b>Transition on Individual Educational Plans</b>	
Summary	The district's findings of noncompliance for transition on IEPs (standard T16-16) was 86.7 percent in the 2013-14 school year, with a decrease to 60 percent in the 2014-15 school year. In the 2015-16 school year, there are no findings of noncompliance for standard T16-16.
Recommendations	Continue to monitor students' transition IEPs using the BEESS Compliance Manual.
Required Actions	N/A
<b>Phases 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process</b>	
Summary	By <b>March 17, 2017</b> , the SST, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the district's action plan and determine additional next steps, as appropriate, via a scheduled telephone call. The district will provide documentation to the district's BEESS liaison via <a href="mailto:BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org">BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org</a> prior to the scheduled call.

## Technical Assistance

1. **Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders** (Florida's PBIS 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 of 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 catalog state laws and regulations related to school discipline.
5. **Functional Behavioral Assessment and Positive Intervention Benchmarks of Effective Practice** (Florida's PBIS Project) may be accessed at [http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/pbs\\_FBA\\_Benchmarks.pdf](http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/pbs_FBA_Benchmarks.pdf).
6. **PS:Rtl Technology** may be accessed at <http://www.floridarti.usf.edu/index.html>. One function of this project provides regional technology coordinators and technology specialists the support to effectively implement accessible instructional materials, assistive technologies, learning technologies, and universal design for learning principles within all tiers of instruction. This project also manages, coordinates and supports the regional assistive technology loan libraries.

## State Support Team for Miami-Dade County School District

### **Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

325 West Gaines Street  
Suite 614, Turlington Building  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399  
850-245-0475  
<http://www.fldoe.org/ese>

Monica Verra-Tirado  
Bureau Chief  
BEESS  
[monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org](mailto:monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org)

Leanne Grillot  
Educational Director  
DRM  
[leanne.grillot@fldoe.org](mailto:leanne.grillot@fldoe.org)

Bethany Mathers  
PEER/MTSS Consultant  
SSS  
[bethany.mathers@fldoe.org](mailto:bethany.mathers@fldoe.org)

Curtis Jenkins  
School Counseling Consultant  
SSS  
[ctjenkins@usf.edu](mailto:ctjenkins@usf.edu)

Jerry Brown  
Program Specialist  
DRM  
[jerry.brown@fldoe.org](mailto:jerry.brown@fldoe.org)

### **BEESS Discretionary Projects**

Kelly Justice  
Problem Solving Facilitator  
PS:Rtl  
[justice@usf.edu](mailto:justice@usf.edu)

Stephanie Martinez  
Technical Assistance Specialist  
PBIS  
[sam2@usf.edu](mailto:sam2@usf.edu)

Alina Rodriguez  
Project Manager  
Multiagency for Students with  
Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities  
[rodiguez003@dadeschools.net](mailto:rodiguez003@dadeschools.net)

Barbara Krakower  
Facilitator  
FIN  
[bkrakower@contactfin.com](mailto:bkrakower@contactfin.com)

JaSheena Ekhatior  
Facilitator  
FIN  
[jekhatior@contactfin.com](mailto:jekhatior@contactfin.com)

Gwen Lipscomb  
Program Specialist  
FDLRS-Reach  
[gwen.lipscomb@browardschools.com](mailto:gwen.lipscomb@browardschools.com)

Tony Dutra  
Region 5 Technology Coordinator  
PS:Rtl  
[tdutra@usf.edu](mailto:tdutra@usf.edu)

Kay Ratzlaff  
Coordinator of Instructional Resource  
Services  
Florida Instructional Materials Center for  
Visually Impaired  
[kratzlaff@fcimcvi.org](mailto:kratzlaff@fcimcvi.org)

Margaret Sullivan  
Director  
State Personnel Development Grant  
[msulliva@fgcu.edu](mailto:msulliva@fgcu.edu)



Pam Stewart, Commissioner  
313217M