

**2019-20 Exceptional Student Education
On-Site Monitoring Report**

**Flagler County School District
September 17-18, 2019**



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>

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

Email: BRIC@fldoe.org

Telephone: 850-245-0475

Fax: 850-245-0987



**Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
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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 1003.01(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.

Section 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities (SWD), establishes documentation, reporting and monitoring requirements for districts regarding the use of restraint and seclusion on SWD. 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 SWD. As required, the 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 On-Site Monitoring Process

Background Information

In a letter dated August 16, 2019, the superintendent of the Flagler County School District was notified that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit to provide additional supports, which included incidents of restraint and seclusion.

School Selection

It was determined that the on-site monitoring process would involve one or both of the following schools for school administrator, teacher, paraprofessional, school support team (SST) and parent focus groups:

- Lewis E. Wadsworth Elementary School
- Flagler Palm Coast High School

2019-20 ESE On-Site Monitoring Focus Areas

The district's Local Education Agency Profile, located at <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/data/>, was shared with the district

leadership team at the welcome meeting on day one of the on-site monitoring visit. In addition, historical data for incidents of restraint were shared.

Incidents of Restraint

According to the FDOE’s restraint and seclusion web-based reporting system, the number of incidents of restraint in the district increased from 66 incidents during the 2016-17 school year to 95 incidents during the 2017-18 school year. During the 2018-19 school year, the number of incidents of restraint decreased to 71. The total percentage of SWD restrained in the district for the 2018-19 school year was 1.11 percent, while the state average was 0.77 percent. The number of incidents of restraint from August 1 to mid-November 2019, was less than 10 incidents, which indicates a decrease from the 2018-19 school year.

According to the district’s 2018-19 SP&P document, the district’s annual goal was to reduce the number of incidents of restraint by five percent. During the 2018-19 school year, the number of incidents of restraint decreased from 95 to 71, which represents a decrease of 25.3 percent. The district met this goal for the 2018-19 school year.

	2016-17 (August – July)	2017-18 (August- July)	2018-19 (August – July)	2019-20 (August – mid-November)
Number of Incidents	66	95	71	*
Number of Students	36	37	22	*

**Less than 10*

Incidents of Seclusion

There were no incidents of seclusion reported to the FDOE web-based reporting system during the 2018-19 school year.

Interviews Conducted

Administrator Focus Groups

Members of the State Support Team conducted focus groups with administrators from Lewis E. Wadsworth Elementary School and Flagler Palm Coast High School.

Themes that emerged from these focus groups included the following:

- Administrators are eager to learn and improve programs to better support students’ needs.
- Administrators make it a point to know their students’ individual needs.
- Increased training is needed on inclusion models for general education teachers as well as high expectations for SWD using a full continuum of support for inclusion.
- Differentiated support for schools is needed at cluster sites.
- There is a need for professional development and ongoing coaching for teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities on behavioral and instructional strategies.

Teacher Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with teachers from Lewis E. Wadsworth Elementary School and Flagler Palm Coast High School.

Themes that emerged from these focus groups included the following:

- Teachers feel supported by district and school leadership.
- There is a need for professional development and instructional support for teachers and content specialists who teach access courses.
- There is a need for general education teachers to be trained in an inclusion model that supports SWD, as well as the need for a full continuum of support for inclusion.
- More training is needed for preventative measures regarding behaviors for students with significant behavioral needs.
- ESE support facilitators have high caseloads and are not able to adequately serve their students.
- A full-time behavior specialist is needed to assist with implementation and support for behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) as the current behavioral specialist is assigned to multiple schools.

Paraprofessional Focus Group

Members of the SST conducted a focus group with paraprofessionals who work in the classrooms of SWD from Lewis E. Wadsworth Elementary School and Flagler Palm Coast High School.

Themes that emerged from the focus group included the following:

- All paraprofessionals feel positive about changes in school leadership and feel supported by the district.
- Additional training prior to starting as a paraprofessional is needed to prepare for the intensive needs of the students they serve.
- All paraprofessionals work directly for the teacher and all instructional activities are supervised by the teacher.
- Training is needed for social and emotional strategies; understanding Individual Education Plans (IEPs), BIPs and academic strategies; and knowledge regarding the types of disabilities of the students in the classrooms.
- Paraprofessionals reported that all classroom staff need continuous coaching and support when implementing behavior strategies with students with significant behavioral needs.
- Training for all school staff is needed to assist with preventative and de-escalation strategies for students with significant behavioral needs.

School Support Team Focus Group

Members of the SST conducted a focus group with school support team members who provide support to SWD from Lewis E. Wadsworth Elementary School and Flagler Palm Coast High School.

Themes that emerged from the focus group included the following:

- There is a concern that the full continuum of placement is not offered and full inclusion and self-contained classrooms are the only options for most students.
- There is a lack of resources and knowledge for teachers to provide support at Tier 1 and

Tier 2 as teachers want to go straight to the most restricted environment first, such as a one-on-one paraprofessional, before the student is identified as needing ESE services.

- There are high caseloads for ESE staff that serve the ESE students in general education classes, which prohibit them from being able to adequately provide the supports as listed on students' IEPs.
- More training is needed for ESE and general education teachers on behavior interventions and strategies.

Parent Focus Group

Members of the SST conducted a focus group with parents of SWD from the Flagler County School District.

Comments from this focus group included the following:

- Parents reported they like receiving emails via the ESE Parent List Serv.
- The district advisory council is very active and feels valued and supported.
- An external pilot program for ESE coaches taking place at Old Kings Elementary School is working well and is needed at the schools with the cluster-site programs.
- More opportunities are needed outside the classroom for SWD to interact with students without disabilities.
- Parents reported that students are being pushed out of general education classrooms into self-contained classrooms because the general education teachers are not properly trained.
- Parents reported that most teachers are not automatically providing accommodations and are not aware of student's IEP goals or services.
- District and school leaders and general education teachers need a culture change regarding inclusion.
- Teachers need more training and support for behavior as many students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are being written referrals that are resulting in unnecessary suspensions.
- ESE support facilitators have large caseloads and are not able to adequately serve their students.
- Parents feel there should be a "no tolerance" policy for bullying or bias concerning ESE students and the district needs consistent leadership expectations for all staff concerning ESE programs as "all means all."

Commendations

1. The district's federal cohort graduation rate for SWD increased from 55.6 percent in 2016-17 to 75.7 percent in the 2017-18 school year, which is above the state target of 62.3 percent.
2. The district's dropout rate for SWD decreased from 12.8 percent in 2017-18 to 7.1 percent in the 2018-19 school year, which is below the state target of 9.5 percent.

2019-20 Next Steps

Recommendations for Professional Development
<p>It is recommended that the district collaborate or continue to collaborate with BEESS discretionary projects on strategies and professional development training for staff as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) and the Partnership for Effective Programs

for Students with Autism Teacher Partnership, the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS), and FDLRS-Multidisciplinary Educational Service Centers—regarding teachers of students with ASD to include the analysis of functions of severe problem behaviors and strategies for providing support for the students.

- Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities and CARD— regarding facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and students with ASD, emotional behavioral disabilities and their families.
- FDLRS and Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) —regarding inclusive scheduling training.
- FIN—regarding training local school administrators in how to better use and verify data on educational settings for their students.
- Access Project—regarding support to current instructional academic coaches and all teachers who provide instruction for SWD enrolled in access courses.

Recommendations for Staffing and Supports

The district must ensure that adequate staffing is being provided for implementation of IEPs. Therefore, it is recommended that the district collaborate with other similarly sized districts to identify best practices for structuring district- and school-level supports for all positions that provide services to SWD, such as the following:

- Provision of additional ESE-certified teachers to provide support to SWD served in general education settings to ensure that students’ IEPs are being implemented as written.
- Additional supports (e.g., full-time behavioral specialist, speech-language pathologist, social worker and board-certified behavioral analyst) for students enrolled in special programs at cluster school sites.
- Review caseloads and specific job descriptions assigned to behavioral specialists, staffing specialists, school psychologists and guidance counselors to ensure implementation and follow-up activities regarding BIPs and behavioral goals in IEPs.

Recommendations for Instructional Support

Identify strategies to increase awareness of and participation in training for paraprofessionals in the following areas:

- Social and emotional strategies to address students’ behavioral needs.
- The components of an IEP and BIP and the roles to implement both.
- Academic strategies to assist the teacher with instruction.
- The types of disabilities of the students in the classrooms.

Follow Up to the ESE Monitoring Visit

Following a review of the district’s 2020 LEA Determination and additional data, BEESS will determine the level of support needed to improve student outcomes and communicate next steps.

Technical Assistance

1. **Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders** (Florida Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Project: MTSS [FLPBIS:MTSS]) may be accessed at https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/pbisresources/RTIB_Guide_101811_final.pdf. FLPBIS:MTSS 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 **Exceptional Student Education 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 2015-16 through 2017-18 school years may be accessed at <http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
3. The FDOE's technical assistance paper DPS: 2016-13, entitled, "**Least Restrictive Environment Considerations Related to Individual Educational Plans,**" dated January 15, 2016, may be accessed at <https://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7540/dps-201613.pdf>. This document provides guidance on the provision of services for students with disabilities in the LRE.
4. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released **School Discipline Guidance** in 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 following resource documents 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, which draws from emerging research and best practices;
 - **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources**, which indexes federal technical assistance and other resources; and
 - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations**, which catalogs state laws and regulations related to school discipline.
5. The **Project 10: Transition Education Network** may be accessed at <http://project10.info>. Project 10 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 postsecondary 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. Examples of assistance provided related to graduation rates include using school-level data for graduation success, technical assistance to improve data collection, analysis and data-driven decision making, in order to develop a color-coded student graduation tracking system that can be coordinated with existing initiatives or systems. Regarding dropout, Project 10 supports dropout prevention strategies for students with disabilities, school-based enterprise, service learning and early warning system.

6. The **Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) Associate Centers Support** may be accessed at <http://www.fdlrs.org>. The 19 FDLRS associate centers provide an array of instructional and technical support services to school districts statewide. The four central functions of each FDLRS center are Child Find, parent services, human resource development, and professional learning and technology. The centers collaborate with districts, agency and support personnel, communities, families, and educational personnel providing support services for educators, school administrators, parents, and students with disabilities. Examples of professional development related to graduation rates include Florida standards and access points, differentiated instruction, access to the general curriculum, Strategic Instruction Model™, behavior and discipline, Standing up for Me, self-advocacy, responsive classroom, and district-specific supports. Professional development related to dropout includes differentiated instruction, accommodations, Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, and Success (known as CHAMPS), Tough Kids, discipline in the secondary classroom, support for parent involvement, Professional Development Alternatives for Positive Behavior Support module, universal design for learning, small-group planning and problem solving, disability awareness, and district-specific supports.
7. The **Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)** may be accessed at <http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/>. FIN collaborates with all districts and schools to provide customized services and supports to ensure that students with disabilities have the same educational, social and future opportunities as their peers. In partnership with districts and schools, FIN facilitates implementation of best practices for inclusive education through data-driven, student-focused problem solving across districts and schools. In addition, FIN facilitates implementation of professional development and provides technical assistance and resources to district and school personnel in order to increase knowledge and skills to build and sustain capacity.
8. The **Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Project (PS/Rtl) Technology** may be accessed at <http://www.floridarti.usf.edu/index.html>. One function of this project is to provide support to regional technology coordinators and technology specialists 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.
9. The **Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)** may be accessed at <http://www.sednetfl.info/>. The 19 regional SEDNET centers assist Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide the necessary mental health and academic supports to students with or at risk of emotional and behavioral disabilities to prepare students to achieve academic success; graduate high school; and become college, career and life ready.
10. The **PS/Rtl – Technology and Learning Connections (TLC)** may be accessed at <http://www.tlc-mtss.com>. TLC provides guidelines and resources to support the implementation of universal design for learning. A quarterly newsletter that focuses on technology integration to support the local development of highly effective classrooms for all students may also be accessed. TLC’s winter 2016-17 newsletter focused on math instruction, resources and tools to eliminate barriers and increase achievement for all students and can be viewed at <http://conta.cc/2kjsuGt>. To sign up to receive this quarterly newsletter, go to <http://bit.ly/1TLoHLQ>. Additional resources are available at <https://www.tlc-mtss.com/resources>.

11. The **Center for Autism and Related Disabilities** may be accessed at <http://florida-card.org>. The seven regional autism centers provide nonresidential resource and training services for persons of all ages and of all levels of intellectual functioning who have autism, a pervasive developmental disorder, an autistic-like disability, a dual sensory impairment, or a sensory impairment with other disabling conditions. Each center provides services within its geographical region of the state and service delivery is consistent for all centers and each center coordinates services within and between state and local agencies and school districts.
12. The **Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)** may be accessed at <https://tats.ucf.edu/>. TATS is a statewide system of technical assistance and training that promotes high-quality programs, which lead to and support positive outcomes for prekindergarten children with disabilities and their families.
13. The **State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)** project builds capacity to increase school completion rates of students with disabilities, through the provision of professional development to support and scale-up existing research-based practices, develop capacity for use of evidence-based dropout prevention strategies, and enlist parental support of these research based practices. These practices include Check & Connect (C&C) and the Strategic Instruction Model™ (SIM). C&C is a Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention used with secondary school students who show warning signs of disengagement with school and who are at risk of dropping out. At the core of C&C is a trusting relationship between the student and a trained mentor who both advocates and challenges the student to keep education salient. SIM is a literacy program centered on promoting effective teaching and learning of critical content in schools. Focusing on the Learning Strategies Curriculum and Content Enhancement Routines, SIM strives to help teachers make decisions about what is of greatest importance, what can be taught to help students become more effective learners, and how to teach so that all students, including students with disabilities, increase their proficiency in the Florida standards. SPDG does not have a website; however, if you have questions, contact Margaret Sullivan, director of SPDG, at msullivan@fgcu.edu.
14. The **FLPBIS:MTSS** may be accessed at <http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu>. Significant behavior problems contribute to unsafe school environments and to reductions in student performance; therefore, FLPBIS:MTSS is committed to building the capacity of school districts so that they may better assist schools to develop effective discipline, social skills teaching and behavior support strategies for all students.
15. The **Institute for Small and Rural Districts (ISRD)** may be accessed at <http://isrd.nefec.org/>. ISRD provides a forum for school district staff to keep abreast of a wide array of topics impacting the delivery of services to students with disabilities and their families, such as curriculum and instructional practices; educational policies, procedures and practices; behavior support; and transition. ISRD's primary purpose is to provide staff development, training and technical support to a network of 35 small and rural school districts, lab schools, the Florida Virtual School and the Department of Corrections. Overall, ISRD's goal is to ensure that service to students with disabilities and their families is enhanced and that positive outcomes for students with disabilities is achieved through increased student performance.

SST Members for Flagler 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
Monica.Verra-Tirado@fldoe.org

Heidi Metcalf
Senior Educational Program Director
Program Accountability, Assessment and
Data Systems
Heidi.Metcalf@fldoe.org



Richard Corcoran, Commissioner
313233A