

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

**Hillsborough County School District
November 17-19, 2015**

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
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August 25, 2016

Mr. Jeff Eakins, Superintendent
Hillsborough County School District
901 E. Kennedy Blvd.
Tampa, Florida 33602-3408

Dear Superintendent Eakins:

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 the Hillsborough 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 November 17-19, 2015. Those information sources included interviews with district and school staff, local educational agency profiles, and an action-planning and problem-solving process.

The Hillsborough County School District was selected for an on-site visit for the following focus areas: discipline (4B), incidents of restraint and seclusion. 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.

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

Superintendent Eakins
August 25, 2016
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Ms. Maryann Parks, General 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.fl DOE.org/ese/mon-home.asp>.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Hillsborough 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@fl DOE.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Monica Verra-Tirado".

Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Chief
BEESS

Enclosure

cc: Maryann Parks
 Heidi Metcalf
 Anne Bozik
 April Katine

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Hillsborough County School District

November 17-19, 2015

Authority

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation, is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all exceptional student education (ESE) laws (sections 1001.03(3), 1003.571 and 1008.32, Florida Statutes [F.S.]) and rules. One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (s. 300.1(d) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]). 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 document.

ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process

Background Information

The 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those State Performance Plan 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 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 (K) through Grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in K 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 occurred in advance of the first 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 first on-site visit was conducted on January 14-17, 2014.**
- 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 Hillsborough County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: graduation rates, dropout rates and least restrictive environment.

School Selection

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

- East Bay High School
- Dorothy Thomas Center
- Simmons Exceptional Center

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
- Anne Bozik, Program Specialist, Instructional Support Services, Lead
- April Katine, Program Director, Bureau Resources and Information Center
- Jakita Jones, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
- Jackie Roumou, Program Specialist, DRM

BEESS Discretionary Projects

- Lisa Yount, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Problem Solving: Response to Intervention (PS:RtI)
- Karen Childs, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)
- Dia Davis, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Facilitator, PBIS
- Nanci Nolan, Region 6 Coordinator, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Michael Levine, Supervisor, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Associate Centers (FDLRS) Hillsborough
- Karen Berkman, Executive Director, Center for Autism Related Disabilities (CARD)
- Rose Iovannone, Principal Investigator, Director Interdisciplinary Center for Evaluation and Intervention
- Margaret Sullivan, 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 – 20 participants
- School-level administrator focus groups – 16 participants
- Teacher focus groups – 19 participants
- School walk-through debriefings – 13 classrooms
- Seclusion room checklist visits – Four seclusion rooms

- Student focus group – Nine participants
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – 20 participants

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

The following information is taken from the **2013-14 on-site monitoring** report. A status update to the required actions and recommendations has been added for each area listed.

Next Steps	
Educational Environment	
Summary	The resource room placement of 15 percent exceeds the school district's enrollment group and the state average.
Recommendation	The school district should continue to consider ways that the specially designed instruction offered in the resource room for students with disabilities could be supported and implemented in the general education setting.
Required Action	None
Status Update for 2013-14 Monitoring Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district continues to monitor the percentage of time students with disabilities spend in resource classes. • Strategy trainings are being provided to ESE and general education teachers so students can be served in the regular classroom with the supports and strategies necessary to ensure success. • The district is collaborating with Florida Inclusion Network to provide inclusion support. • The district is training all staff on inclusive practices.
Alternatives to suspensions for students with disabilities	
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34 CFR §300.530(d)(1) states that a child with a disability who is removed from his or her current placement for disciplinary reasons under 34 CFR §300.530(c) or (g) must continue to receive educational services as provided in 34 CFR §300.101(a), so as to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting his or her IEP goals. • The district is counting a student's days in Alternative To Out of School Suspension (ATOSS) as a day spent in school. Therefore, the district is obligated to provide educational services for students at ATOSS as specified in 34 CFR §300.530(d)(1). • Students with disabilities had limited access to ATOSS centers due to lack of transportation. • Not all students were provided the opportunity to continue with their classroom assignments while in an ATOSS center. Although students were able to make up work when they returned to their home school, students reported that it was difficult to maintain their current work load while completing missed assignments.

Next Steps	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff did not consistently receive student IEPs or Section 504 plans, pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 for students participating in ATOSS.
Recommendations	<p>The school district should consider the following when using alternatives to out-of-school suspension (OSS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school district's discipline database should reflect OSS for those students with disabilities who were offered, but did not participate in ATOSS. It appears that, in some cases, students who were recommended for ATOSS, but did not attend, were not recorded as OSS for those days, causing concerns about the accurate reporting of discipline data. • Provide transportation. • Provide the opportunity to continue to work on goals as identified in the students' IEPs. • Provide the opportunity for students to work on assigned classwork from their home school. • Ensure that teachers at the ATOSS centers have access to the students' IEPs or other required educational plans.
Required Actions	<p>By July 31, 2014, the school district must provide reports to BEESS of student attendance, discipline data and ATOSS attendance for students with disabilities, for the period of August 1, 2013, to May 30, 2014, for the following schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buchanan Middle School • Chamberlain High School • Eisenhower Middle School • Gibsonton Elementary School • Madison Middle School • Morgan Woods Elementary School • North Tampa Alternative School • Van Buren Middle School • Wharton High School <p>By July 31, 2014, the school district must provide reports to BEESS of student attendance, discipline data and ATOSS attendance for students with disabilities, for three additional middle schools and two high schools, according to a sampling established by the school district. The reports must cover the period of August 1, 2013, to May 30, 2014.</p>
Status Update for 2013-14 Monitoring Visit	<p>The reports of student attendance, discipline data and ATOSS attendance for students with disabilities, for the period of August 1, 2013, to May 30, 2014, to be provided by July 31, 2014, was provided to BEESS.</p> <p>The district continues to explore ways to expand the pool of qualified candidates for behavior coach positions. The following information was provided regarding behavior coaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behavior coach units have increased from 3.0 to 6.0. Currently there are 4.0 positions filled. • Behavior coaches are working with 10 school sites and with teachers of students with emotional behavioral disabilities (EBD)

Next Steps	
	<p>and ESE specialists at other school sites that serve students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), EBD and intellectual disabilities (InD).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly District Intervention Review Committee (DIRC) meetings include the behavior coaches. The committee assigns behavior coaches to schools each month based on data and need. <p>In addition, the district offers supports by way of other positions (e.g. Data Review Team (DRT) multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) facilitator). The district shared the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESE supervisor, ESE DRT and the staffing team review suspension data and work directly with school staff. Functional assessment consultation team members are assigned to each area to consult. Behavior coaches are providing training to the school-based ESE specialists, so they can provide ongoing coaching at their site. Behavior coaches provide trainings that focus on specific disability categories, such as ASD, InD and EBD. They also provide training at the summer symposium. Two ESE specialists will facilitate professional learning communities (PLCs) specifically for EBD teachers and specialists. MTSS for behavior (MTSS:B) are provided directly to school staff. The MTSS:B webinar is available to all schools. Early Warning Systems are in place. <p>The district reviews OSS data for students with disabilities to determine parameters on where to focus additional behavior coaching supports. The following information was shared regarding this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District success coaches have been placed at every middle and high school and target dropout prevention. Success Coaches are collaborating with ESE staff to ensure layers of supports are being provided to students with disabilities. Behavior coaches are providing training for teachers of students with an EBD to highlight preventive strategies. Early warning systems for schools in the form of a dashboard have been designed to identify students early and provide prevention strategies for dropout prevention. School resource officers' (SROs) roles and responsibilities have been clarified to clearly delineate the SROs' responsibilities from the administrators' responsibility regarding student discipline. ESE department staff provides annual disability awareness training for SROs. The MTSS:B webinar is available to all schools. A Behavior Tracker is now available to all teachers. This will assist with minor behavior data collection and be utilized to better address minor behaviors that may not warrant major consequences, such as OSS and in-school suspension. <p>New district-wide procedures have been put in place to reduce</p>

Next Steps	
	<p>suspensions which include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The types of offenses and consequences related to behavior have been clarified. • The days of suspension without further district-level intervention have been limited. • School administrators must seek permission from their area Superintendent to suspend a student for more than five consecutive days. • The ESE Coordinator for staffing and compliance has provided additional training to administrators, psychologists and school-level staff in understanding discipline requirements for students with disabilities and specifically for manifestation determination meetings. • The ESE department work group recommended additional procedures to increase progress monitoring to include emphasis on fidelity of implementation of the IEP process and functional behavioral analysis and positive behavior intervention; monitoring and identifying additional resources that a student might need in the area of behavior. • The student handbook has been updated to reflect current discipline practices. • Area Superintendents are monitoring suspension data on a weekly basis and are sharing data with the ESE area team, so they can provide supports to schools. • It has been proposed that students with disabilities not be suspended more than 10 days for the year. • A cultural institute was provided this summer for all administrators with a focus on implied bias.
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process	
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional action planning and problem solving for other priorities for the school district in regard to restraint and seclusion and discipline will be scheduled by the SST liaison for the school district and the ESE director. • By January 20, 2015, the SST team, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan(s) and determine additional next steps, as appropriate.
Status Update for 2013-14 Monitoring Visit	<p>District staff indicated they did not conduct a meeting by January 20, 2015, with members of the SST regarding reviewing the effectiveness of their plan. However, district staff met on their own and updated their action plan and provided the SST with a copy of the plan.</p> <p>The following information was provided regarding restraint and seclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESE Director receives a monthly update, including monthly data and cumulative data related to restraint and seclusion. • The Area Supervisors receive monthly data related to restraint and seclusion and follow up with their schools.

Next Steps	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior coaches, members of the DIRC and area supervisors meet at the school sites where the coaches are assigned. They review the schools' restraint and seclusion data and the behavior coaches' monthly reports. • Behavior coaches have a monthly PLC to review data and problem solve. • Area Supervisors are copied on notification of all restraints and seclusions so they can provide support to students and staff. • The district is collaborating with FDLRS to provide training to specific schools based on their restraint and seclusion data.

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

The following data are related to the focus areas and activities for the 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance for Hillsborough County School District which took place on November 17-19, 2015.

Discipline Risk Ratios 4B

Discipline risk ratios by racial/ethnic group are calculated for students with disabilities by dividing the discipline rate of a specific racial/ethnic group by the rate of all nondisabled students. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that students with disabilities of a certain racial/ethnic group are equally likely to be suspended or expelled. The following chart indicates that students with disabilities in Hillsborough County School District whose race is black are **5.45** times more likely to be suspended or expelled as all nondisabled students, which is an increase of 0.30 percent from the 2013-14 school year.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Hillsborough	4.86	8.56	5.15	5.45
State	2.67	2.50	2.92	2.72

Incidents of Restraint

According to the school district's 2015-16 SP&P document, Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NCI) is used to train on the use of restraint. The district recommends NCI training to school staff who work with the most challenging behaviors and when maintaining safety is an ongoing challenge for a particular school site. The plan for reducing the need for the use of restraint is to reduce the percentage of restraints overall to five percent less than the 2014-15 school year rate.

According to the FDOE's restraint and seclusion database, included in the table below, the number of incidents of restraint since 2014-15 decreased during the 2015-16 school year. In addition, the total percentage of students with disabilities restrained in Hillsborough County School District for the 2015-16 school year was **0.83** percent, which is below the state average of 0.94 percent.

Hillsborough - Restraint					
2013- 14 (August - July)		2014-15 (August - July)		2015-16 (August - July)	
Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students
934	314	950	317	670	244

Restraint data for the 2015-16 school year indicated there was a decrease of 280 incidents of restraint with 73 less students being restrained.

Incidents of Seclusion

According to the school district's 2015-16 SP&P document, the district's plan for reducing the need for the use of seclusion is to reduce the percentage of seclusions overall to five percent less than the 2014-15 school year rate.

According to the FDOE's restraint and seclusion database, Hillsborough County School District shows a decrease in the number of incidents of seclusion since 2014-15. However, the total percentage of students with disabilities secluded in the district for the 2015-16 school year was 0.29 percent, which is above the state average of 0.17 percent.

Hillsborough - Seclusion					
2013-14 (August - July)		2014-15 (August - July)		2015-16 (August - July)	
Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students
181	95	350	109	244	85

Seclusion data for 2015-16 indicated there was a decrease of 106 incidents of seclusion with 24 less students being secluded.

Interviews Conducted

Student Focus Group

Members of the SST conducted a student focus group at East Bay High School where nine students participated. Topics included: courses, career goals, assistance received to prepare for life after high school, reasons students drop out, assistance schools could offer, and resources and services needed.

East Bay High School

Comments from the students included the following:

- The students expressed they did not want to drop out as some family members had done because they did not want to participate in illegal activity to "pay bills and make a living" which

these family members had done. Students also stated that school personnel helped “catch them up” with their course credits and grades and encouraged them to stay on track.

- The students reported their IEPs were being implemented.
- The students were positive regarding mentoring programs that have been implemented.
- Students also stated that they and their parents were encouraged to advocate for themselves.
- The students stated they had a strong desire to remain in school in order to have a more positive and productive future. Most of these students had career goals.
- The students expressed there had been some discussion with them regarding post-graduation goals, particularly with the school assistant principal, the coach and their parents, and some students had attended IEP team meetings during which these goals were addressed.
- The students stated that suspension served at ATOSS was not worthwhile since schoolwork was not typically provided at ATOSS.
- When asked about ideas to help reduce dropout rates, the students suggested being able to participate in sports regardless of grade point averages, being able to provide more student input and teachers being friendlier.

Teacher Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted teacher focus groups at East Bay High School, Dorothy Thomas Center and Simmons Exceptional Center.

East Bay High School

Themes that evolved from the teacher focus group related to suspension and expulsion included the following:

- The teachers reported that a strong mentoring system with both formal and informal interventions had been created and they were positive about the program, which included a peer leadership mentoring program.
- Teachers indicated that parents were encouraged to be advocates for their children and to meet with teachers and administrators regarding reasons for suspensions.
- The teachers reported that there was a strong and formalized system of transition from middle to high school, and middle school students who were experiencing difficulties were being paired with mentors.
- Teachers reported that each time a suspension occurs, the student's grades and academic progress are discussed to ensure that an academic focus is prioritized.
- The teachers shared that an alternative to suspension and additional tutoring opportunities had been created that includes Saturday school and the Kahn Academy, which offers practice exercises, instructional videos and personalized learning dashboards that allow students to study at their own pace.

Dorothy Thomas Center

Themes that evolved from the teacher focus group related to restraint included the following:

- There was a consensus among the teachers that it is valuable when a behavior coach shares data, hypotheses and possible solutions, during presentations.
- More in-depth trauma-informed care training was requested by the teachers.
- Teachers expressed that the use of non-instructional personnel on the aggression management team was effective.
- Teachers indicated that the cool-off, reflect and exit team was responsive, flexible and creative in de-escalating students.

- Teachers also indicated that the school's Terp reward room and the Kids and Canines program are effective incentives for students.
- There is an articulation specialist who accompanies students returning to home zone schools to ensure successful reentry.
- Some of the teachers asked for clarification as to what constitutes an escort restraint related to the possibility of over reporting of restraints. This information, contained in the BEESS restraint and seclusion technical assistance paper was provided to the district subsequent to the visit.

Simmons Exceptional Center

Themes that evolved from the teacher focus group related to seclusion included the following:

- Teachers shared that debriefing with students following restraint and seclusion was routine, effective and a valuable process.
- The teachers reported that a sensory room was created to meet the sensory needs of students.
- The teachers shared that analysis of antecedents and functions of behaviors is not routinely occurring.
- Teachers reported that implementation of the elementary program for non-violent crisis intervention removes instructional personnel from the learning environment when crisis response is required, which leads to decreased instructional time led by the teachers.

Administrator Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted administrator focus groups at East Bay High School, Dorothy Thomas Center, and Simmons Exceptional Center.

East Bay High School

Themes that evolved from the administrator focus group related to suspension and expulsion included the following:

- A behavior intervention class had been created where strategies to manage anger were being taught. A "praise-and-push" system of grade checks with students has also been implemented.
- A "Step-Kids" mentoring program has been developed for at-risk middle school students that provides orientation, teacher and peer mentors, and administrative support and contact. There has also been a conflict resolution program developed for female students.
- Strong administrative leadership and belief in building relationships to reduce behaviors of concern were expressed. There has been a shift from "discipline deans" to "instructional leaders," who stress academics as well as behaviors.
- A student nomination process has been implemented so that each month, students who have made growth in different areas are recognized.
- Persistent school efforts have led to increased parental participation.
- A school psychologist was needed at the school to provide support.
- There was a high turnover rate at the school with the result being many new ESE staff members.
- A paradigm shift in thinking regarding discipline was needed as some teachers are "resistant to change" and prefer punitive approaches.
- More co-teaching is needed and training will be provided on this.

Dorothy Thomas Center

Themes that evolved from the administrator focus group related to restraint included the following:

- Two school counselors meet with all students on a weekly basis.

- Instructional staff attempt to meet with the students' families on a regular basis.
- The school holds a monthly event to encourage family participation.
- The group thought that data related to discipline disproportionality for black students were not being accurately calculated or reported.
- The school's transition plan, which facilitates a student's transition back to their neighborhood school, is effective.

Simmons Exceptional Center

Themes that evolved from the administrator focus group included the following:

- The teachers and staff at the school were caring and passionate about working with the students.
- The principals contacted other center schools to determine successful practices at similar schools.
- The school principals participate in monthly problem-solving meetings to review and analyze student data.
- High school students are provided the opportunity to attend classes at the career technical school.

School Walk-Through Debriefings

School walk-through debriefings were conducted at Dorothy Thomas Center and Simmons Exceptional Center. Thirteen classrooms were visited. The following observations were noted:

- Students in classrooms were utilizing technology effectively.
- Students seemed highly engaged.
- Small, cooperative learning groups were being utilized.
- A student was observed as highly and positively engaged in the school's canine therapy program.

Four seclusion classrooms at Simmons Exceptional Center were visited. All four of the seclusion rooms revealed surfaces that were not free of potentially dangerous materials such as raised and damaged metal strips and screws, which presented potential cutting injuries. During the on-site visit, these concerns were shared with school administration. On July 27, 2016, district ESE staff indicated that an inspection of the seclusion rooms were scheduled and all corrections would be made prior to the start of the 2016-17 school year.

Recommendations

1. The district's federal dropout rate for students with disabilities has been below the state average since 2011-12. The district's rate for 2014-15 is 15.3 percent with the state average being 18.7 percent.
2. The district will roll out the first phase of restorative practices in the fall of 2016. Schools that have a high readiness level will be selected via the restorative practices readiness survey. The restorative practice protocol will be used by all schools in the fall. The district will focus the initial training on building a common language and then on the process of restorative circles for the 2016-17 school year. Alongside these efforts, the district will be training and implementing a re-entry protocol as part of the district's new discipline matrix. This restorative practice protocol will be used by all schools in the fall.
3. The ATOSS program will phase out during the 2015-16 school year and will be replaced by the district's new Education, Prevention and Intervention Center (EPIC) program. The EPIC program will provide a positive, proactive, and instructional approach for supporting students who are struggling with behavior and social-emotional wellness.

4. A change in discipline policies for students now ensures that students can only be suspended up to five days in a row (excluding drugs, weapons and bodily injury offenses). If a suspension greater than five days is being considered, school personnel must first seek approval from the area superintendent assigned to their school. In addition there must be a plan of re-entry for the student after three days of suspension.
5. The district provides students with innovative initiatives such as Kids and Canines program, mentoring by members of the chorus, and programs that provide opportunities for growth, leadership and positive role models.
6. Strong programs to increase success in transitioning back to neighborhood zone schools have been implemented at Dorothy Thomas Center, including individual transition plans, teacher communication on effective strategies to receiving schools and check-in visits with students by the school's ESE specialist.
7. Alternatives to suspension and tutoring opportunities have been created.

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

During the problem-solving and action-planning meeting with the SST and district-level staff, the district's Superintendent shared some of his visions for students, which involved the following themes:

- Every child will receive the appropriate interventions and support based on their needs.
- Ensuring safety for students within schools is a priority.
- Creating a school environment where teachers are motivated to teach and students are motivated to learn is the priority goal.
- Creating a culture in the schools that focuses on procedures, classroom routines and organization, and exemplary role models is important.
- Mentoring students in need while utilizing restorative and proactive strategies is important.

Next Steps	
Discipline (4B)	
Summary	<p>According to the 2014-15 4B discipline data, students with disabilities in Hillsborough County School District whose race is black are 5.45 more likely to be suspended or expelled as all nondisabled students. This is an increase of 0.30 percent from the 2013-14 school year.</p> <p>In addition, the district has been identified for disproportionate 4B discipline rates each year since the 2011-12 school year.</p>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue district collaboration with PBIS:MTSS in order to build the school district's capacity to better assist schools to develop effective discipline, social skills teaching and behavior support strategies for all students. • Continue district collaboration with SEDNET regarding facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and students with EBD and their families and to provide professional development in culturally responsive and equitable discipline. • Continue district collaboration with the CARD and Partnership for Effective Programs for Students with Autism Teacher Partnership, FDLRS and FDLRS-Multidisciplinary Centers (MDC) to provide professional development for teachers of students with ASD. The

	professional development should include analysis of functions of severe problem behavior and strategies for providing support for the students.
Required Actions	<p>The district must participate in the PBIS Disproportionality workgroup during the 2016-17 school year.</p> <p>By October 7, 2016, the district is to provide its BEESS liaison with an update on the progress made toward participation with this workgroup.</p> <p>By December 16, 2016, the district is to provide its BEESS liaison with real-time indicator data as of this date, an analysis of the data and an explanation of why indicator rates have improved, not improved or remained the same.</p>
Incidents of Restraint	
Summary	<p>The number of incidents of restraint since 2014-15 decreased during the 2015-16 school year. In addition, the total percentage of students with disabilities restrained in Hillsborough County School District for the 2015-16 school year was 0.83 percent, which is below the state average of 0.94 percent.</p> <p>Restraint data for the 2015-16 school year indicated there was a decrease of 280 incidents of restraint with 73 less students being restrained. The district is to be commended for its efforts toward this reduction.</p>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue district collaboration with PBIS:MTSS in order to build the school district's capacity to better assist schools to develop effective discipline, social skills teaching and behavior support strategies for all students. • Continue district collaboration with SEDNET regarding facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and students with EBD and their families. • Continue district collaboration with the CARD and Partnership for Effective Programs for Students with Autism Teacher Partnership, FDLRS and FDLRS-MDC to provide professional development for teachers of students with ASD. The professional development should include analysis of functions of severe problem behavior and strategies for providing support for the students. • Consider utilizing the <i>ASD Preventing Seclusion and Restraint for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder</i> and <i>EBD Moving From Crisis Management to Crisis Prevention for Students with an E/BD</i> modules regarding how to implement supports to reduce the need for seclusion.
Required Actions	None
Incidents of Seclusion	
Summary	<p>The district shows a decrease in the number of incidents of seclusion since 2014-15. In addition, the total percentage of students with disabilities secluded in the district for the 2015-16 school year was 0.29 percent, which is above the state average of 0.17 percent.</p> <p>Seclusion data for 2015-16 indicated there was a decrease of 106 incidents of seclusion with 24 less students being secluded. Although, the district average is above the state average, the district is to be commended for its</p>

	efforts toward this reduction.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue district collaboration with PBIS:MTSS in order to build the school district's capacity to better assist schools to develop effective discipline, social skills teaching and behavior support strategies for all students. • Continue district collaboration with SEDNET regarding facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and students with EBD and their families. • Continue district collaboration with the CARD and Partnership for Effective Programs for Students with Autism Teacher Partnership, FDLRS and FDLRS-MDC to provide professional development for teachers of students with an ASD. The professional development should include analysis of functions of severe problem behavior and strategies for providing support for the students. • Consider utilizing the <i>ASD Preventing Seclusion and Restraint for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder</i> and <i>EBD Moving From Crisis Management to Crisis Prevention for Students with an E/BD</i> modules regarding how to implement supports to reduce the need for seclusion. • If the district's seclusion data for the first quarter of the 2016-17 school year shows a substantial increase in the district rate compared to the state rate, consider participation in the state-wide PBIS Restraint/Seclusion Workgroup.
Required Actions	None
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process	
Summary	By December 16, 2016 , the ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan and determine additional next steps, as appropriate, via a scheduled telephone call. The district will provide documentation to be discussed to their BEESS liaison 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 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.fl doe.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 January 2014, Volume 4, Issue 1 of the **Office of Special Education Programs Monthly Update**. This package will assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. The resource documents listed below are included in the package, and are available at <http://www.ed.gov/school-discipline>.
 - **Dear Colleague** guidance letter on civil rights and discipline
 - **Guiding Principles** document that draws from emerging research and best practices
 - **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources** that indexes federal technical assistance and other resources
 - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations** that catalogue state laws and regulations related to school discipline
5. **Functional Behavioral Assessments 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.
6. **PS:RtI 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 UDL principles within all tiers of instruction. This project also manages, coordinates and supports the regional assistive technology loan libraries.

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

2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance

State Support Team for Hillsborough County School District

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Pam Stewart, Commissioner

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