

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

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**Madison County School District  
March 29-30, 2016**



This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES), 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 BEES Resource and Information Center (BRIC).

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August 4, 2016

Doug Brown, Superintendent  
Madison County School District  
201 NE Duval Avenue  
Madison, Florida 32340-2599

Dear Superintendent Brown:

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 Madison 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 March 29-30, 2016. Those information sources included interviews with district and school staff, local educational agency profiles, and an action-planning and problem-solving process.

The Madison County School District was selected for an on-site visit for the following focus area related to students with disabilities: coordinated early intervening services for discipline. 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 Brown  
August 4, 2016  
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Ms. Lori Newman, Director of ESE, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for the on-site visit and throughout the visit. In addition, school-level personnel welcomed SST members and demonstrated a continued commitment to the education of students in the school district. This report will be posted on the BEESS website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/e/se/mon-home.asp>.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Madison 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, flowing style.

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

Enclosure

cc: Lori Newman  
Heidi Metcalf  
Karlene Bonin

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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 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 initial on-site visit was March 24-25, 2015.**
- 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 Madison County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for CEIS for discipline.

### **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 interviews, student focus groups and school walk-through debriefings:

- Madison County Central School
- Madison County High 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

- Karlene Bonin, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring
- Anne Glass, School Medicaid Consultant, Student Support Services Project

FDOE, BEESS Discretionary Projects

- Martha Murray, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support: Multi-tiered System of Supports (PBIS:MTSS)
- Carol Milton, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Associate Centers (FDLRS)
- Paige Mace, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities

### **Data Collection**

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Review of recent data
- Welcome session day one with district and school-level staff – 12 participants
- School-level administrator focus groups – 22 participants
- Paraprofessional focus group – four participants
- School walk-through debriefings – 12 classrooms at two schools
- Student focus group – five participants
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – 15 participants

The district completed the Best Practices for Inclusive Education assessment with Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) facilitators on July 24, 2014, and a service plan was developed, which included the following goal:

- By 2014-15, the percentage of students with disabilities scoring as proficient will increase from 19.58 to 35.66 percent in reading and from 15.87 to 32.70 percent in math.

## 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>CEIS Over-identification</b>	
Summary	After conducting the Self-Assessment of MTSS (SAM) Implementation at the district level during the on-site monitoring visit, the district MTSS team determined that the SAM would be conducted with all school-based leadership teams. The district will partner with problem solving: response to intervention (PS:Rtl) members to review results and determine the next steps for supporting the district in MTSS implementation efforts.
Recommendation	The district will follow through on its participation in the SAM national validation study. The district will continue to monitor data and ensure that data are accurately entered and reported to the state regarding the required data elements.
Required Action	N/A
<b>Status Update 2014-15 Monitoring Visit</b>	All schools participated in the MTSS Rtl SAM, where they rated their current problem-solving practices, processes and procedures. The SAM enabled the schools and the district to look at best practices from around the nation and make adjustments to enhance the MTSS Rtl process within the schools to best meet the needs of the students. School problem solving teams looked at data on a regular basis and implemented valid interventions to assist struggling students academically. All students currently served as students with an intellectual disability were re-evaluated for current cognitive and achievement functioning in Grade 5 before transitioning to middle school. Also, students in K, were not evaluated since the district determined that K was an important transition year and students needed more time to adjust to the academic setting of school. Support facilitators, paraprofessionals and interventionists worked with students who were struggling with academic skills at the Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention levels. Professional development for teachers was provided by FDLRS on Universal Design for Learning and the Responsive Classroom. FDLRS also provided professional development for paraprofessionals on teaching reading strategies in small group settings within the classroom. Teachers also had training from the Regional Assistive Technology Specialist on strategies and assistive technology to use with students as interventions.
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	
Summary	The district leadership team determined that the goal related to graduation would be to increase the percentage of students graduating who are college and career ready. The team determined the main barrier was that some district staff thought many students in the district were not capable of being successful in college.

<b>Next Steps</b>	
Recommendation	The district will continue to monitor data related to college and career readiness in addition to graduation rates.
Required Action	N/A
<b>Status Update 2014-15 Monitoring Visit</b>	The district continued to implement strategies for improvement in the graduation rate. A new Graduation Coach RtI Specialist was hired for the 2015-16 school year. The Graduation Coach, Guidance Counselor and ESE Staffing Specialist conducted regular graduation checks on all students to ensure that the students had all the classes and credits needed for graduation. The ESE Staffing Specialist worked with the Guidance Counselor and administrators at all schools to schedule students with disabilities in appropriate general education classes. The district continued to work with FDLRS and FIN to assist schools and teachers with scheduling and professional development in inclusionary practices. The ESE staff worked closely with the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Coordinator to enable more students with disabilities to participate in CTE courses and earn credits toward graduation and industry certifications toward eventual careers. ESE students were scheduled into CTE courses first, before general education students. The High School High Tech program and Vocational Rehabilitation staff assisted in providing resources to students regarding postsecondary education. One self-contained classroom at the high school and two self-contained classrooms at the Central school were closed for the 2015-16 school year.
<b>Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process</b>	
Summary	By <b>March 31, 2016</b> , the SST, ESE Director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan(s) and determine additional next steps, as appropriate.
<b>Status Update 2014-15 Monitoring Visit</b>	The district will continue to monitor students for behavior and academics from elementary to high school and provide intensive interventions and remediation in deficit areas. This will ensure that all students are provided with the needed instruction and interventions to be successful in school in order to graduate.

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

The following data is related to the focus areas and activities for the 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance for Madison County School District.

#### **Coordinated Early Intervening Services – Discipline**

Districts are required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA funds for CEIS if incidents of removal of students with disabilities through in-school suspension (ISS), out of school suspension (OSS) or expulsion for students with disabilities of any given race are at least **3.5** times more likely to occur when compared to all other races combined. The school district's 2013-14 discipline data indicated that the incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS or expulsion was **3.81** times more likely to occur when compared to students with disabilities of all other races.

## **Interviews Conducted**

### **Student Focus Group**

Members of the SST conducted a student focus group at Madison County High School. 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 drop out, disciplinary issues and additional resources or services needed.

#### **Madison County High School**

- The students who participated in the focus group indicated that they would like courses and subjects that prepared them for what they considered to be “real life.” The students indicated that they would like vocational classes, Reserve Officers' Training Corps, financial and tax information, and classes about reading and how to complete legal documents that are used in real life.
- The students mentioned a specific teacher and the Army recruiter as adults in the high school who showed that they cared about the students and provided support to students. The students indicated that the specific teacher helped students get into college by providing packets on how to apply. In addition, they indicated that if the teacher did not have time during the school day to help, she helped after school hours.
- Some of the students indicated that the teachers assumed all students were going to college. None of the students in the focus group had completed career inventories. Some of the students in the focus group had gone to the career center one time. One student in the focus group had talked with a counselor about careers only one time.
- One student in the focus group had thought of dropping out but would not, because the parents would not allow this. One student, a senior, indicated that the student would drop out and get a GED® if things did not go well this year as the student will not stay in school another year. The other students indicated that they had not thought about dropping out.
- Three of the five students participating in the focus group planned to join the Army after graduation. One student planned to attend college, and one student was unsure of plans after graduation.
- None of the students had been assigned to ISS or OSS. The students indicated that ISS does not help students do better in school. The students said the most common reason that a student is sent to ISS is for having a cell phone out in view while in class.

### **Paraprofessional Focus Group**

Themes that evolved from the focus group of paraprofessionals of the students at Madison County Central School who are receiving interventions for behavior included the following:

- Each grade level now has a dedicated paraprofessional. Paraprofessionals work with both ESE and general education students in small groups, collect data for progress monitoring, and implement positive behavior intervention plans.
- Discipline is handled in the classroom now more than it was before. Sending students out of the classroom to the principal for discipline is now only used as a “last resort.” The use of interventions in the classroom has increased in order to prevent behavioral incidents.
- Paraprofessionals have received more professional development during the last school year than in the past. Whenever teachers have an early release day to attend professional development opportunities, the paraprofessionals attend also. This year paraprofessionals have been trained in Crisis Prevention Institute’s Nonviolent Crisis Intervention and how to de-escalate behaviors. The paraprofessionals participating in the focus group indicated that they would like more professional

- development regarding dealing with behaviors.
- Sometimes the students respond better to the paraprofessionals than to the teachers.
- During this school year the atmosphere in the school has seemed more positive. The school seems to have a better reputation in the community. In addition, the number of discipline referrals has decreased and the use of positive behavioral management systems has increased.

### **Administrator Focus Groups**

Administrative staff members at Madison County Central School and Madison County High School were interviewed regarding the factors involved in the high risk ratio of black students being disciplined and MTSS interventions for behavior.

Themes that evolved from the interviews and focus groups with the administrators included the following:

- Many new programs have been introduced or expanded in the school during this school year to decrease behaviors in the classrooms that would lead to discipline referrals. *Bronco Bucks* are distributed to students for appropriate behavior and may be used to buy items in the school store twice a month. *Capturing Kids Hearts* involves teachers meeting and greeting each student at the door each morning, and each classroom developing a social contract with the intent of building relationships. A schoolwide mentoring program has been introduced. *Remind 101* allows parents and teachers to communicate by text or email.
- All students have been screened this year using a universal screening tool called *Behavioral, Emotional and Social Traits* (BEST). Interventions are provided based on the results of BEST. The MTSS team regularly reviews data and tries to find new interventions, if needed. *Tough Kids Toolbox* was started this year in all grades as part of the MTSS process and has provided good motivators to students. The Dean of Students sends a discipline report daily to all teachers that includes data for each grade level and for each classroom.
- Many parents have indicated to the administrators that they do not want to be involved in the decision-making process regarding interventions for the students. Some parents of students with behavioral difficulties indicated that they feel as if they cannot do anything about the behaviors. Behavior strategies are discussed with parents at IEP team meetings and Section 504 Plan meetings, but not during intervention meetings for Tier 2 and Tier 3, because most parents do not want to attend these meetings.
- Students who are frequently assigned to ISS are referred to a local community mentoring program. A member of a community counseling service visits students at the school for counseling with parental consent. FDLRS has a weekly program at the school for students with disabilities and will allow students without disabilities to attend with parental consent if there are empty slots. A college services coach meets with students to discuss discipline issues. Students are transported to a dropout prevention program and offered mentoring regarding behavior, discipline and attendance. The Army recruiter and coaches are supportive of teachers and students.

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

School walk-through debriefings were conducted at Madison County Central and Madison County High School. Twelve classrooms were visited.

- Classrooms were all quiet and students were actively engaged in classroom instruction.
- Classrooms were all clean, spacious, orderly, and well lit. Appropriate posters were on the walls.
- All elementary classrooms had social contracts posted, which listed student expectations and

consequences.

- All classrooms had technology in different forms and technology was in use during the visits.
- Hallways in the elementary school had displays of student work and projects.
- Paraprofessionals and support facilitators were observed working with the students. Co-teaching models were not observed.

## Commendations

1. The district has a high graduation rate and low dropout rate compared to the state rate.
2. Some students who were formerly in self-contained classrooms are now being served in the general education classrooms.
3. Administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals are regularly reviewing data and collaborating about students and interventions.
4. Opportunities for professional development have increased, and seem to be well received by staff interviewed.

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

As part of the monitoring and assistance on-site visit, the SST members, ESE director and representatives from the Madison County School District participated in an action-planning and problem-solving process. The group reviewed the data collected and a list of resources and barriers was determined. The district's current action plan was revised to address CEIS discipline.

Next Steps	
<b>CEIS - Discipline</b>	
Summary	The district's 2013-14 discipline data indicated that the incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS or expulsion was <b>3.81</b> times more likely to occur when compared to students with disabilities of all other races.
Recommendation	The district should continue implementing their action plan that was developed on March 30, 2016, which includes the provision of professional development and training to school-level staff to address behavioral strategies, alternatives to suspension, trauma informed care and cultural sensitivity.
Required Action	None
Summary	By <b>March 31, 2017</b> , the SST, 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](http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/RTIB%20Guide%20101811_final.pdf) and provides an overview of the critical components of an MTSS for behavior. These critical components describe systems changes that are necessary for a results-driven ESE system.
2. The district's **ESE Policies and Procedures** document provides district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual, physical or mechanical restraint and seclusion developed by the FDOE. The school district's document for the 2013-14 through 2015-16 school years may be accessed at <http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
3. The technical assistance paper entitled **Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Restraint and Seclusion with Students with Disabilities**, dated October 14, 2011, may be accessed at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-6212/dps-2011-165.pdf>. This document provides guidance regarding the use, documenting, reporting and monitoring of restraint and seclusion with students with disabilities in school districts, including (a) when restraint or seclusion might be used, (b) considerations when selecting a training program for restraint, (c) what should be documented, (d) parent notification and reporting, and (e) monitoring use. It also contains information about s. 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities.
4. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released **School Discipline Guidance** in the January 2014, Volume 4, Issue 1 of the **Office of Special Education Programs Monthly Update**. This package will assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. The resource documents listed below are included in the package, and are available at <http://www.ed.gov/school-discipline>.
  - **Dear Colleague** guidance letter on civil rights and discipline
  - **Guiding Principles** document that draws from emerging research and best practices
  - **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources** that indexes federal technical assistance and other resources
  - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations** that catalog 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](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 Universal Design for Learning 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 Madison County School District**

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