

**2017-18 Exceptional Student Education
On-Site Monitoring Report**

**Polk County School District
February 5-7, 2018**



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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**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 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, 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

The 2017-18 ESE On-Site Monitoring process focuses on those State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for CEIS and the following indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities:

- Indicator 1 – Graduation: Percentage of youth with individual educational plans (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma.

- Indicator 2 – Dropout: Percentage of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.
- Indicator 4 – Rates of suspension and expulsion:
 - A. Percentage of districts that have a significant discrepancy in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of more than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs.
 - B. Percentage of districts that have (a) a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of more than 10 days for children with IEPs; and (b) policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and support, and procedural safeguards.
- Indicator 5 – Educational environments:
Percentage of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21:
 - A. In the regular class 80 percent or more of the day;
 - B. In the regular class less than 40 percent of the day; and
 - C. In separate schools, residential facilities or homebound/hospital placements.
- Indicator 10 – Disproportionality, specific disability categories: Percentage of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.
- CEIS – Services provided to students in kindergarten through Grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through Grade 3) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment.
- Restraint – Rate of incidents of restraint, as reported on the FDOE website.
- Seclusion – Rate of incidents of seclusion, as reported on the FDOE website.

The ESE On-Site Monitoring process includes four phases:

- Phase 1 is composed of planning activities that occur in advance of the initial on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 is the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST).
- Phase 3 is follow-up 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 how the district is addressing each of the focus areas, and should include participation of the action-planning and problem-solving process team.

In a letter dated August 3, 2017, the superintendent of the Polk County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: graduation rate, dropout rate, least restrictive environment (LRE), incidents of seclusion, concerns regarding low math scores for middle-grades students with disabilities, concerns for preschool children functioning within age expectations in communication, and concerns related to valid and reliable data.

School Selection

Upon review of the school district's data, it was determined that the on-site monitoring process would involve all of the following schools for school administrator and teacher focus groups and school walk-through debriefings and some of the schools for parent and student focus groups:

- Dr. N.E. Roberts Elementary School
- Elbert Elementary School

- Sleepy Hill Middle School
- Haines City Senior High School
- Lake Gibson Senior High School
- Doris A Sanders Learning Center

On-Site Activities

On-Site Visit Team

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

FDOE, BEESS

- Monica Verra-Tirado, State Director for Special Education, Chief
- Heidi Metcalf, Senior Educational Director, Program Accountability Assessments and Data Systems (PAADS)
- Jakita Jones, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
- Steve Barnes, Program Specialist, PAADS

Peer Monitors

- Barbara Myers, ESE Director, Jefferson County School District
- Chuck Bradley, ESE Director, Lee County School District

FDOE, BEESS Discretionary Projects

- Franklin Coker, Regional Representative, Project 10: Transition Education Network
- Deanne Cowley, Regional Coordinator, Problem Solving: Response to Intervention (PS:Rtl)
- Shelby Robertson, Learning and Development Facilitator, PS:Rtl
- Teri Crace, Senior Manager, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Poinsetta Tillman, Senior Manager, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) Associate Centers
- Bonnie Dupuis, Facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
- Brian Gaunt, Inter-Project Coordinator, Florida Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports Project: Multi-Tiered System of Support (FLPBIS:MTSS)
- Cindy Medici, Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) Project Manager, State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)
- Kimberly Swan, Project Facilitator, Check & Connect Project Staff, SPDG
- Mindy Stevens, Assistant Director, Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)
- Tara Jeffs, Technology Coordinator, PS:Rtl Technology & Learning Connections (TLC)
- Sandra Erickson, Facilitator, Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)
- Sandy Smith, Director, TATS
- Bettianne Ford, Facilitator, TATS

Data Collection

On-site monitoring activities included the following:

- Review of recent data
- Welcome session with district and school administrators and staff – 38 participants

- Administrator focus groups – 29 participants
- Teacher focus groups – 38 participants
- Parent focus group – Three participants
- Student focus groups – 23 participants
- School walk-through debriefings – 33 classrooms
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – 37 participants

The district’s Best Practices for Inclusive Education (BPIE) plan dated November 9, 2017, was revised on January 11, 2018, and resulted in the following goals being developed:

- Goal 1: Meet with the School Choice Office to clarify policy and procedures to reduce barriers for accepting and maintaining students with disabilities so that a minimum of 30 percent (six out of 18) of magnet schools are serving students with disabilities by May 2019.
- Goal 2: The district will increase regular class placement from 76 to 83 percent and reduce separate class placement from 12 to nine percent in order to increase student achievement by May 2019.

Status Update for the 2016-17 On-Site Monitoring Visit

The following information is taken from the **2016-17 on-site monitoring** report. A status update to the required actions and recommendations has been added for each area listed.

Graduation Rate	
Summary	The district’s graduation rate for students with disabilities increased from 41.8 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 45.9 percent during the 2015-16 school year. Graduation rates for both school years were below the state targets of 56.3 percent for the 2014-15 school year and 58.3 percent for the 2015-16 school year.
Recommendations	Based on comments from the interviews with school administrators and district staff, early warning system (EWS) data are available at individual school sites and there is a need for district and school staff at all levels to know the state, district and school targets for graduation for students with disabilities. In addition, district and school staff noted a need for consistent procedures to use EWS data well to identify students at risk for not graduating on time.
Required Actions	<p>During the on-site visit the district team informed BEESS that the following actions would be completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish goals for the performance targets for on-time graduation for students with disabilities throughout the district. • Collaborate with Project 10 and PS:Rtl project staff to provide training on the use of EWS data to identify students at risk of not graduating on time or dropping out. <p>The district must provide documentation on each of the above-mentioned actions to the district’s BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by March 31, 2017.</p> <p>In addition, the district must provide a thorough narrative describing the EWS, the status of the EWS implementation, and the resources and</p>

	personnel that are responsible for the EWS with corresponding student supports. This documentation must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by June 5, 2017 .
Status Update	<p>On March 31, 2017, the district provided documentation regarding the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan that included 13 action steps in order to increase the district's graduation rate from 41.8 to 60.3 percent. In addition, the plan addressed steps to decrease the district's dropout rate from 36.2 to 13.4 percent. • Documentation was provided regarding the district's collaboration with Project 10 staff and the Office of Assessment Accountability and Evaluation staff to develop a program for students with disabilities for tracking grades, attendance and behavior, and progress toward meeting graduation requirements. In addition, the district reported that ongoing professional development was being provided to schools as needed on the use of the EWS. <p>On June 9, 2017, the district provided documentation that reported migration of the EWS and the district's student data elements to a newly acquired student data system. In addition, training was provided to administrators on the framework of MTSS in July 2017 and would be on-going for all school staff.</p> <p>In addition, the district's graduation rate increased from 45.9 percent during the 2015-16 school year to 50.3 percent during the 2016-17 school year.</p>
Dropout Rate	
Summary	The district's dropout rate for students with disabilities has been above the state target for the 2013-14 through 2015-16 school years.
Recommendations	It is recommended that the district collaborate with PS:RtI, SPDG and Project 10 staff to implement strategies to decrease the district's dropout rate for students with disabilities.
Required Actions	See the required actions for the graduation rate.
Status Update	The district's dropout rate decreased from 34.6 percent during the 2015-16 school year to 31.7 percent during the 2016-17 school year.
Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)	
Summary	The district's 2015-16 LRE rate for regular class placement is 73.4 percent, which is below the state target of 79.0 percent.
Recommendations	Based on comments from the interviews with school administrators and district staff, it is recommended that the district explore opportunities to use data to refine and expand the supports available to students with disabilities at all school sites (e.g., data chats with teachers, innovative master scheduling based on student needs, and alternative supports in classrooms).
Required Actions	During the on-site visit, the district team informed BEESS that the following actions would be completed:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with their management information systems contact to ensure that the data are accurately reported for LRE, which includes regular class, resource classes, separate classes and other separate environment. • Collaborate with FIN project staff on flexible scheduling methods for students with disabilities and with the district’s management information system staff to ensure appropriate coding and state reporting of LRE-related data. • Collaborate with FDLRS and FIN project staff to create professional development opportunities for implementing universal design for learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction to allow for additional inclusion model classrooms in the district. <p>The district must provide a thorough narrative describing each of the above-mentioned actions to the district’s BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 31, 2017 • June 5, 2017
<p>Status Update</p>	<p>On March 31, 2017, the district provided the following documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIN staff was diligently working with the district to develop a reporting mechanism in the IEP student database to track student placement in the regular, resource, separate and separate day school setting for LRE. • FIN and FDLRS project staff trained teachers, administrators and support staff on the flexible scheduling method to enter into the schools’ master schedules to support inclusive education for students with disabilities. • School-based and district-level compliance specialists generate reports monthly to monitor student placement in the LRE, check for annual reviews of IEPs, track three-year reevaluation due dates and review for LRE coding errors. • FDLRS and FIN project staff offered professional development opportunities to teachers to learn UDL, differentiated instruction, responsive classroom, and collaborative teaching. • FIN and FDLRS project staff and the district leadership team collaborated to develop the BPIE plan. <p>On June 9, 2017, the district provided the following documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district utilizes the IEP and student database to generate monthly reports for schools on LRE, so that schools are aware of the educational learning environment of students at the individual school sites. Tabulations for LRE are run monthly at the district level to monitor movement of students to more restrictive placements for accurate state reporting. • The district’s ESE department is able to identify schools that appear to struggle with maintaining students in the LRE and offers technical assistance as needed. • The district currently collaborates with FIN and FDLRS project staff to provide training and assistance to schools on flexible

	scheduling upon request. Training schedules are available in the professional development system and Outlook calendars.
Low Math Scores for Middle-Grades Students with Disabilities	
Summary	For middle-grades math, the district averages for students with disabilities with a passing score of level three or above were 11.1 percent for the 2014-15 school year and 10.7 percent for the 2015-16 school year. The state averages for students with disabilities with a passing score of level three or above were 22.7 percent for the 2014-15 school year and 21.0 percent for the 2015-16 school year, while the state targets were 51.0 percent for the 2014-15 school year and 56.0 percent for the 2015-16 school year.
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that the district consider the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize a team problem-solving approach and identify barriers to student success in middle-grades math courses including, e.g., steps to ensure quality instruction, supports and interventions for students with disabilities in middle-grades math courses. • Ensure that students with disabilities are in the correct math classes and are receiving accurate accommodations according to their IEPs. • Collaborate with discretionary project staff (e.g., FDLRS and PS:Rtl) to provide training and technical assistance to math teachers (e.g., new teachers and out-of-field teachers). <p>In addition, when the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) and end-of-course math scores for the 2016-17 school year are available, the district should review and analyze the data results. The district should continue to monitor student progress for middle-grades math students during the 2017-18 school year and consider additional professional development if the scores have not improved.</p>
Required Actions	None.
Status Update	The math scores for middle-grades students with disabilities scoring a level three and above increased from 10.7 percent during the 2015-16 school year to 12.6 percent during the 2016-17 school year.
Phase 4 of the ESE Monitoring Process	
Summary	<p>The Polk County School District was selected for an on-site visit for the following focus areas related to students with disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation rate • Dropout rate • LRE • Transition IEPs aligned with postsecondary outcomes • Concerns regarding low math scores for middle-grades students with disabilities
Required Action	By September 15, 2017 , designated BEESS staff and members of the problem-solving team that met on day three of the visit (November 30, 2016), will reconvene via a conference call to share how they are addressing each of the above-mentioned focus areas and determine next steps. The district will coordinate with BEESS regarding the date

	and time of the conference call and provide documentation (e.g., recent data, professional development, problem-solving notes and action plans) to BEESS by September 8, 2017 .
Status Update	The follow-up call was rescheduled to October 30, 2017, because of Florida's 2017 hurricane season and school closings. During the call, the district shared with BEESS staff and the applicable SST members how they were addressing each of the targeted areas. Documentation was provided prior to the scheduled conference call.

2017-18 ESE On-Site Monitoring Results

The following data are related to the focus areas and activities for the 2017-18 ESE On-Site Monitoring for the Polk County School District.

Graduation Rate

The federal uniform high school graduation rate for students with disabilities is calculated by taking the number of first-time ninth graders from four years ago, plus the number of incoming transfer students on the same schedule to graduate, minus the number of students from this population who transferred out or left to enroll in a private school or home education, divided by the number of standard diplomas from the same group. The district's federal graduation rate for students with disabilities increased from 41.8 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 45.9 percent during the 2015-16 school year. The 2016-17 graduation rate increased to 50.3 percent, which is below the state target of 60.3 percent.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Polk	41.8%	45.9%	50.3%
State Target	56.3%	58.3%	60.3%

Dropout Rate

The federal dropout rate for students with disabilities is calculated by taking the number of students who exited special education as a result of dropping out, divided by the number of students who graduated with a regular high school diploma, special diploma, certificate of completion, special certificate of completion, dropped out or died. The district's federal dropout rate for students with disabilities decreased from 36.2 percent for the 2014-15 school year to 34.6 percent for the 2015-16 school year. The 2016-17 dropout rate decreased to 31.7 percent, which is above the state target of 11.7 percent.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Polk	36.2%	34.6%	31.7%
State Target	15.1%	13.4%	11.7%

Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)

To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are to be educated with students without disabilities. These LRE data are calculated by dividing the number of students with

disabilities aged 6 through 21 served in the regular class for 80 percent or more of the day, by the total number of students with disabilities aged 6 through 21 reported in October (survey 2). These data do not include parentally placed private school students or students served in Florida county jails, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice facilities or Florida Department of Corrections. The district's percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class increased from 73.4 percent during the 2015-16 school year to 75.7 percent during the 2016-17 school year. The 2017-18 LRE rate decreased to 73.7 percent, which is below the state target of 83.0 percent.

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Polk	73.4%	75.7%	73.7%
State Target	79.0%	82.0%	83.0%

Incidents of Seclusion

According to the FDOE's restraint and seclusion database, the number of incidents of seclusion in the district increased from 47 incidents during the 2014-15 school year to 98 incidents during the 2015-16 school year. During the 2016-17 school year, the number of incidents of seclusion increased to 105.

According to the district's 2016-19 SP&P document, the district's annual goal for the 2016-17 school year was to reduce the number of incidents of seclusion by 10 percent. During the 2016-17 school year, the number of incidents of seclusion increased from 98 to 105. The district did not meet this goal.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of Incidents	47	98	105
Number of Students	15	46	42

Math Scores for Middle-Grades Students with Disabilities

After reviewing state assessment data trends for the FSA, BEESS identified students with disabilities in middle-grades math (Grades 6-8) as an area in critical need of support. BEESS established a tiered criteria in order to provide needed supports for middle-grades math in each district in order to increase the number of students with disabilities scoring level three or higher and to close the gap between students without disabilities and students with disabilities. The percentage of students with disabilities that scored level three and above in middle-grades math decreased from 11.1 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 10.7 percent during the 2015-16 school year. The 2016-17 percentage increased to 12.6 percent, which is below the state average of 22.2 percent.

FSA Scores of Level Three and Above in Middle-Grades Math	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Polk			
Percentage of Students with Disabilities	11.1%	10.7%	12.6%
Percentage of Students without Disabilities	48.1%	48.3%	48.1%
Achievement Gap between Students with and without Disabilities	37.0%	37.6%	35.5%
State			
State Target for Students with Disabilities	51.0%	56.0%	61.0%
Average for Students with Disabilities	22.7%	21.0%	22.2%
Average for Students without Disabilities	59.4%	60.3%	61.2%
Achievement Gap between Students with and without Disabilities	36.7%	39.3%	39.0%

Preschool Students with Disabilities Functioning within Age Expectations in the Communication Domain

Early literacy and communication are the building blocks for the development of effective reading skills; therefore, BEESS identified the communication domain within preschool-aged children with disabilities as an area of focus for the district. The district’s percentage of preschool-aged children with disabilities functioning within age expectations in the communication domain increased from 54.4 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 59.3 percent during the 2015-16 school year. The 2016-17 school year percentage decreased to 58.7 percent, which is below the state target of 73.4 percent.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Polk	54.4%	59.3%	58.7%
State Target	69.9%	71.4%	73.4%

Valid and Reliable Data

During the 2016-17 school year, the district did not submit valid and reliable data for SPP Indicator 5 during the data verification activity. The district should continue to monitor timely corrections, as only 64 of 114 errors (56%) were corrected. For the 2017-18 school year, the district corrected 100% of the 92 identified errors during the data verification activity for SPP Indicator 5.

Interviews Conducted

Administrator Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with administrators from Dr. N.E. Robert Elementary School, Elbert Elementary School, Sleepy Hill Middle School, Haines City Senior

High, Lake Gibson Senior High School and Doris A Sanders Learning Center on topics such as graduation, dropout, LRE, incidents of seclusion, low math scores for middle-grades students with disabilities and preschool proficiency in the communication domain.

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

- Administrators feel supported by district staff.
- There is a need for increased district alignment and school staff collaboration.
- Success coaches work with at-risk senior students at the high schools.
- There is a lack of parental involvement, which hinders student academic achievement.
- At all schools, there is a lack of transportation for students to participate in after-school tutoring and extracurricular activities.
- At all schools, there is a lack of consistent data reporting of student withdrawal codes.

Teacher Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with teachers from Dr. N.E. Robert Elementary School, Elbert Elementary School, Sleepy Hill Middle School, Haines City Senior High, Lake Gibson Senior High School and Doris A Sanders Learning Center on topics such as graduation, dropout, LRE, incidents of seclusion, low math scores for middle-grades students with disabilities and preschool proficiency in the communication domain.

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

- Most teachers are enthusiastic and passionate about the education and success of the students.
- Most teachers feel supported by the administration.
- Although there is a lack of a common planning time, teachers of students with disabilities and general education teachers find a way to collaborate regarding student performance.
- At one school, there is an assigned LEA liaison to assist in the coordination and implementation of the students' IEPs.
- There is a need for professional development in differentiated instruction, trauma-informed care, and PBIS.
- At some schools, there is not enough staff (e.g. qualified teachers, paraprofessionals and behavioral support).

Student Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with students from Sleepy Hill Middle School, Haines City Senior High and Lake Gibson Senior High School. Students were asked to share their perspectives on topics such as graduation, dropout and post-school activities.

Comments from the student focus groups included the following:

- Not all students attend their IEP meetings.
- Students would like general education teachers present at IEP meetings.
- Most students know how to advocate for their accommodations.
- Students have at least one adult on campus they can talk to.
- There is a lack of transportation to access after-school programs.
- For some students, teachers do not implement their IEPs or understand their disability.

Parent Focus Group

Members of the SST conducted a focus group with parents of students with disabilities aged 14 years or older regarding postsecondary transition.

Themes that emerged from the parent focus group included the following:

- School staff and teachers care about their students.
- There is a need to improve system expectations for students with disabilities.
- There is a need for increased inclusion with the appropriate supports for teachers and students.
- There is inconsistent IEP implementation by teachers.
- There is a lack of information on transition and employment opportunities.
- Students need additional support and accommodations for success in extracurricular activities.
- Students do not have access to technology and accommodations in the classrooms to complete assignments and assessments.
- Communication between schools and parents needs improvement.
- There are concerns that students who lack self-advocacy skills may not advance to the next grade level.
- Teachers of students in self-contained classrooms seem to have lower expectations for students with disabilities.

School Walk-Through Debriefings

School walk-through debriefings were conducted at Dr. N.E. Robert Elementary School, Elbert Elementary School, Sleepy Hill Middle School, Haines City Senior High, Lake Gibson Senior High School and Doris A Sanders Learning Center regarding student engagement, school climate and evidence of academic and behavioral expectations.

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

- Most campuses were clean and inviting.
- At one school, the portables that served many students with disabilities were separated from the main campus and did not allow ease of access (e.g., the ramps to the classrooms were not covered, and the condition of the sidewalks made accessibility difficult.)
- The high schools exhibited strong school pride.
- Most classrooms contained supported learning visual aids and displayed student achievement.
- At one school, self-contained classes lacked technology.

Commendations

1. Although the district's federal graduation rate for students with disabilities is below the state target, the district's graduation rate has increased over a three-year period by 8.5 percent.
2. Six of seven traditional high schools in the district have increased their graduation rates for students with disabilities.
3. The district's dropout rate has continued to decrease over the last three years for students with disabilities, even though it is still above the state target.

2017-18 Next Steps

Graduation Rate	
Summary	The district's federal graduation rate for students with disabilities increased from 41.8 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 45.9 percent during the 2015-16 school year. The 2016-17 graduation rate increased to 50.3 percent, which is below the state target of 60.3 percent.
Recommendations	The district should consider the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase opportunities for communication with students and parents regarding school programs available to students. • Ensure that teachers and administrators are aware of the professional development and the online training that the discretionary projects offer educators to support positive student outcomes, including graduation. • Collaborate with Project 10 staff to implement the EWS.
Required Actions	The following documentation must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by September 12, 2018 : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed narrative or flowchart describing the implementation of the EWS from start to finish. • A summary detailing how the district will ensure fidelity of the implementation of the EWS, including the process of how training will be implemented and a timeline established. • A detailed listing of the resources and personnel available to carry out the duties related to the implementation of the EWS, including the role of the data-entry clerks. <p>In addition, documentation of verification of the EWS training must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by October 22, 2018, to include dates of the training; agenda; names, signatures, titles and schools of training participants; copies of any content presented; and the names and titles of the presenters.</p>
Dropout Rate	
Summary	The district's federal dropout rate for students with disabilities decreased from 36.2 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 34.6 percent during the 2015-16 school year. The 2016-17 dropout rate decreased to 31.7 percent, which is above the state target of 11.7 percent.
Recommendations	It is recommended that the district collaborate with PS:Rtl, SPDG and Project 10 staff to implement strategies to decrease the district's dropout rate for students with disabilities.
Required Actions	The district must complete the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the data for students coded as a dropout for the 2017-18 school year to determine if they are coded accurately. A definition of the dropout codes (DNE, W05, W13, W15, W18, W21, W22, and W23) can be found in the PK-12 Database Manuals, Appendix A, at http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/databases/database-manuals-updates/.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide face-to-face training to all district and school staff, including data-entry clerks responsible for ensuring correct identification and use of student exit codes. <p>A detailed summary of the above-mentioned activities must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by October 22, 2018.</p>
Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)	
Summary	<p>The district's percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class increased from 73.4 percent during the 2015-16 school year to 75.7 percent during the 2016-17 school year. The 2017-18 LRE rate decreased to 73.7 percent, which is below the state target of 83.0 percent.</p>
Recommendations	<p>The district should consider the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review sections B-9 through B-12, B-14, C-4, C-9 and C-11 of FDOE's Technical Assistance Paper, DPS: 2016-13, "Least Restrictive Environment Considerations Related to Individual Educational Plans," which can be accessed at https://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7540/dps-201613.pdf. • Continue to collaborate with FDLRS and FIN project staff for professional development, including inclusive scheduling training and ensure that the BPIE services plan is implemented in the district and schools.
Required Actions	<p>The district's BPIE services plan dated January 11, 2018, includes a goal to increase regular class placement from 76 to 83 percent and reduce separate class placement from 12 to nine percent in order to increase student achievement by May 2019. The services plan includes the following action steps to be completed by May 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide job-embedded professional development, at all levels, to include collaborative teaching and flexible scheduling. • Conduct data chats with prekindergarten (PreK), elementary, middle, high and transition schools. <p>Provision of evidence demonstrating implementation (e.g., LRE reports, school schedules, STAR data, grade reports, achievement data) of the above-mentioned action steps must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 22, 2018 • December 7, 2018 • February 18, 2019
Incidents of Seclusion	
Summary	<p>During the 2016-17 school year, the district's goal was to decrease the number of incidents of seclusion by 10 percent. The number of incidents of seclusion increased from 98 incidents during the 2015-16 school year to 105 incidents during the 2016-17 school year; therefore, the district did not meet this goal.</p>

<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>The district should consider the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review FDOE’s Technical Assistance Paper, DPS 2011-165, “Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Restraint and Seclusion with the Students with Disabilities,” which can be accessed at https://info.fl DOE.org/docu share/dsweb/Get/Document-6212/dps-2011-165.pdf. • Review practices to identify areas of improvement and alignment within district policies and procedures to establish a clear understanding and appropriate use of seclusion. • Continue to collaborate with PBIS and SEDNET project staff on strategies to decrease the number of incidents of seclusion.
<p>Required Actions</p>	<p>The district must complete the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the statewide PBIS Seclusion Workgroup. • Compile and review seclusion data quarterly and summarize the problem-solving activities that result from these reviews. <p>The quarterly seclusion data and the summary of problem-solving activities must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 22, 2018 • December 7, 2018 • February 18, 2019
<p>Math Scores for Middle-Grades Students with Disabilities</p>	
<p>Summary</p>	<p>The percentage of students with disabilities that scored level three and above in middle-grades math decreased from 11.1 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 10.7 percent during the 2015-16 school year. The 2016-17 percentage increased to 12.6 percent, which is below the state average of 22.2 percent.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>The district should consider the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify barriers in core instruction, as well as barriers in Tier 2 and Tier 3, that are preventing all students from having access to and mastering grade-level standards. • Engage students in their own learning through academic talk, including questioning, tasks and assessments that connect the relevancy of the content as they build on prior knowledge. • Implement UDL principles so that students have options to access and engage with instruction, as well as options for demonstrating their learning. • Develop practices at schools for common planning, common instruction and common assessment to ensure consistency and support. • Increase teachers’ use of formative assessments to make instructional decisions. • Collaborate with the PS:Rtl project staff to provide professional development to math teachers that will increase knowledge of content and pedagogy.

Required Actions	None.
Preschool Proficiency in the Communication Domain	
Summary	The district's percentage of preschool-aged children with disabilities functioning within age expectations in the communication domain increased from 54.4 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 58.7 percent during the 2016-17 school year, which is below the state target of 73.4 percent.
Recommendations	The district should consider the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the current available curriculum in PreK ESE classes and ensure the curriculum includes rich language and early literacy skill development for all skill levels. • Utilize a progress monitoring system to drive instruction and identify whether targets are being met. • Consider providing an instructional support teacher that is dedicated to PreK ESE, who has specific knowledge in early childhood development (birth to 5) and special education to provide resources, technical assistance and training to teachers. • Collaborate with voluntary PreK staff for inclusive opportunities and professional development. • Provide professional development opportunities to PreK teachers that are specific to early childhood, communication and early literacy skill development.
Required Actions	None.
Phase 4 of the ESE Monitoring Process	
Summary	The Polk County School District was selected for an on-site visit for the following focus areas related to students with disabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation rate • Dropout rate • LRE • Incidents of seclusion • Low math scores for middle-grades students with disabilities • Preschool proficiency in the communication domain
Required Action	By March 13, 2019 , designated BEESS staff and members of the district problem-solving team will reconvene via a conference call to share how they are addressing each of the above-mentioned focus areas and determine next steps. The district will coordinate with BEESS regarding the date and time of the conference call and provide documentation (e.g., recent data, professional development, problem-solving notes and action plans) via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by February 18, 2019 .

Technical Assistance

1. **Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders** (FLPBIS:MTSS) may be accessed at https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/pbisresources/RTIB_Guide_101811_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 **SP&P** document provides district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual, physical, or mechanical restraint and seclusion developed by FDOE. The school district's document for the 2016-17 through 2018-19 school years may be accessed at <http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
3. **FDOE's technical assistance paper DPS: 2011-165, "Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Restraint and Seclusion with Students with Disabilities,"** dated October 14, 2011, may be accessed at <https://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 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 post-school 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, the project supports dropout prevention strategies for students with disabilities, school-based enterprise, service learning and EWS.

6. **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/discipline, Standing up for Me, self-advocacy, responsive classroom, and district-specific supports. Professional development related to dropout include 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, UDL, small-group planning and problem solving, disability awareness, and district-specific supports.
7. **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. **PS:RtI 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 UDL principles within all tiers of instruction. This project also manages, coordinates and supports the regional assistive technology loan libraries.
9. **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. **FLPBIS:MTSS** may be accessed at <http://flpbis.cbcs.usf.edu/>. FLPBIS offers training and technical assistance on implementation of four positive behavior support areas within an MTSS: Tier 1 Universal, Classroom; Tier 2 Supplemental; and Tier 3 Intensive. In addition, FLPBIS offers workgroups on disproportionality that focus on collaboration with district leadership to decrease discipline disproportionality and increase culturally responsive practices. FLPBIS offers workgroups with districts to develop, utilize and maintain practices that minimize the use of restraint and seclusion while maximizing the implementation of practices that are focused on crisis prevention. The Tier 3 for Behavior Redesign workgroup provides training and technical assistance to districts interested in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their districtwide and schoolwide Tier 3 systems for behavior support.

This effort assists districts in building internal capacity to implement and use the functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plan process to guide team-based treatment decisions and identify effective interventions for students with intense behavior or mental health needs.

11. 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 UDL. 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 <http://www.tlc-mtss.com/resources.html>.

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