

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

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**Sarasota County School District  
April 25-27, 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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November 28, 2016

Ms. Lori White, Superintendent  
Sarasota County School District  
1960 Landings Boulevard  
Sarasota, Florida 34231-3365

Dear Superintendent White:

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 Sarasota 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 April 25-27, 2016. Those information sources included interviews with district and school staff, local educational agency profiles, and an action-planning and problem-solving process.

The Sarasota County School District was selected for an on-site visit for the following focus areas related to students with disabilities: coordinated early intervening services (CEIS) related to over-identification, discipline (4A and 4B) and least restrictive environment. The on-site visit was conducted by a state support team (SST), which 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 CEIS and those indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities. Additionally, the process focuses on a shift from ESE compliance to outcomes to prepare all students for college, career and life readiness, which include: increasing standard diploma graduates; decreasing the number of students dropping out of school; increasing regular class placement; decreasing the need for seclusion and restraint; and eliminating disproportionality in eligibility identification and discipline.

Ms. Sonia Figaredo-Alberts, Executive Director of Pupil Support Services, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for and throughout the on-site visit. In addition, school-level personnel welcomed SST members and demonstrated a continued commitment to the education of students in the school district. This report will be posted on the BEESS website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/mon-home.asp>.

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

Superintendent White  
November 28, 2016  
Page Two

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Sarasota County School District. If there are any questions regarding this report, please contact me at 850-245-0475 or via email at [monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org](mailto:monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,

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

Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Chief

Enclosure

cc: Sonia Figaredo-Alberts  
Heidi Metcalf  
Leanne Grillot

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On-Site Visit Report**

**Sarasota County School District**

**April 25-27, 2016**

**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, 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 (SPP) indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for CEIS and the following indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities:

- Indicator 1 – Graduation: Percentage of youth with individual educational plans (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma.
- Indicator 2 – Dropout: Percentage of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.

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

The ESE Monitoring and Assistance process includes four phases:

- Phase 1 is composed of planning activities that occur in advance of the initial on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 is the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST). **The initial on-site visit was conducted on February 12-14, 2014, and the second visit was conducted on April 20-22, 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 Sarasota County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: CEIS related to over-identification, discipline (4A and 4B) and least restrictive environment (LRE).

### 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 administrator, instructional aide and paraprofessional, School Wide Support Team (SWST), teacher, and student focus groups, and school walk-through debriefings:
  - Brentwood Elementary School
  - Emma E. Booker Elementary School



- Booker Middle School
- Oak Park School

## **On-Site Activities**

### **On-Site Visit Team**

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

#### **FDOE, BEESS**

- Monica Verra-Tirado, State Director for Special Education, Bureau Chief
- Leanne Grillot, Educational Program Director, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring, Co-lead
- Heidi Metcalf, Administrator, Program Accountability, Assessment and Data Systems, Co-lead
- Iris Williams, School Social Work Consultant, Student Services Project
- Curtis Williams, Program Director, Education Programs for Juvenile Justice

#### **Peer Monitors**

- Maryann Parks, ESE Director, Hillsborough
- Vickie Cartwright, ESE Director, Orange

#### **BEESS Discretionary Projects**

- Don Kincaid, Director, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports: Multi-Tiered System of Supports (PBIS:MTSS)
- Kelly Justice, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Problem Solving: Response to Intervention (PS:Rtl)
- Deborah Bay, Project Manager, Multiagency for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Debra Giacolone, Director, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)
- Donna Marquis-Cox, Consultant, FDLRS
- Katie Kelly, Facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)

## **Data Collection**

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Review of recent data
- Welcome session with district and school-level staff – 40 participants
- School-level administrator focus groups – 15 participants
- Teacher focus groups – 21 participants
- Instructional aides and paraprofessionals focus group – three participants
- SWST focus group – six participants
- Student focus groups – 12 participants
- School walk-through debriefings – 23 classrooms
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – 33 participants

## **Status Update for the 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-Site 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>Coordinated Early Intervening Services – Discipline</b>	
Summary	<p>The district’s results indicated that black students with disabilities had more incidents of removal through in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS) or expulsion than all other races combined. In the 2012-13 school year, the district’s incidents of removal of black students with disabilities were 3.66 times more likely to occur when compared to all other races combined. In the 2013-14 school year, the risk ratio decreased to 3.44.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that the district include the assistance of the PBIS Project, in an effort to improve districtwide discipline and behavioral concerns.</p> <p>The district will continue to use SEDNET and other discretionary projects to support the district.</p> <p>The district will continue to disaggregate discipline data (incidents, not students) on all students with disabilities by race and ethnicity on a monthly basis to determine if there is disproportionality. The district should use their MTSS process to address disparities and to continue to look at patterns, including teacher patterns.</p>
Required Actions	<p>The district will disaggregate discipline incident data in a form similar to that used in the CEIS – discipline calculation in order to target schools where black students are disproportionately receiving referrals resulting in ISS, OSS and expulsion, when compared to students with disabilities of all other races combined. A meeting will be scheduled by the district to review the data. The meeting will involve staff from the PBIS Project, the BEESS bureau chief or a representative from BEESS, and the appropriate district and school staff.</p> <p>The district will provide BEESS with a narrative explaining how the district’s discipline practices may have contributed to the data results. If improvements need to be made based on the data, the district will need to include in the narrative what their next steps will be to improve in the area of concern that was evident in their data. If the data indicate an increase in discipline referrals, then the district’s narrative will need to indicate how the district plans to decrease their discipline incidents. The district will provide this information to the district’s BEESS liaison <b>no later than March 22, 2016.</b></p> <p>Additionally, the district will provide documentation of how the CEIS funds are allocated. Specifically, the district will need to include a personnel activity report on how the funds are used for each individual. The district will provide this information to the district’s BEESS liaison <b>no later than March 22, 2016.</b></p>

<p><b>Status Update</b></p>	<p>On March 22, 2016, the district provided BEESS with documentation for the required actions related to CEIS – discipline.</p> <p>The district migrated to a new data system and is currently able to access valuable student disciplinary data and disaggregate it. All administrators, behavior specialists and district support personnel have been trained on how to access and use the following reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OSS Detailed Discipline Report</li> <li>• OSS Summary Discipline Report</li> <li>• Student Discipline Report</li> <li>• Student Infraction Report</li> <li>• Risk Ratio Report</li> <li>• Equity Profile Report</li> </ul> <p>The discipline data indicated there was an increase in suspensions across the district from the 2013-14 to the 2014-15 school years. When comparing data from the first semesters of the 2014-15 and the 2015-16 school years, there was a significant decrease in suspensions. The district attributed this improvement to analyzing the data and providing training to administrators and pupil support services personnel to assist teams at schools in the implementation of restorative practices at the elementary level across the district. In addition, there was an increase in the number of Crisis Prevention Intervention instructors within the district and district behavioral support continues to be provided.</p> <p>Upon analyzing the discipline data, patterns were evident in many schools, such as location of incidents and frequency of referrals by teachers. As a result, more staff was allocated to certain areas within the school and additional support was provided to teachers regarding behavioral interventions. The district will continue to implement these practices across the district in an effort to continue the trend of decreasing suspensions. The district also plans to complete equity profiles for each school, so decisions can be made regarding which schools are in need of additional support.</p> <p>The district allocates CEIS funds to add paraprofessional staff to support implementation of academic assistance, as well as assisting in implementation of individualized positive behavioral intervention plans (PBIPs) for maximum benefit. The district’s allocation of CEIS funds is also used for professional development in the areas of differentiated instruction and i-Ready® implementation.</p>
<p><b>Coordinated Early Intervening Services – Over-identification, Black, Emotional Behavioral Disability</b></p>	
<p>Summary</p>	<p>The district’s CEIS over-identification results indicated that the district continues to identify more black students as having an emotional behavioral disability (EBD). Specifically, in the 2014-15 school year, black students in the district were <b>5.07</b> times more likely to be identified as having an EBD compared to all other races combined. This will require that the district withhold 15 percent of</p>

	IDEA funds in the 2015-16 school year for CEIS services.
Recommendations	The district will monitor and analyze data from schools that have determined students eligible as having an EBD. In addition, the district will monitor data for all students eligible as having an EBD, not just those being newly identified. These data will capture any declines that occur due to students being dismissed or placed in another exceptional education program.
Required Actions	<p>Based on the district’s action-step document, it was indicated that funding is used to support instructional aides and paraprofessionals, behavior technical support aides, district ESE liaisons and program specialists. Specifically, it was stated that the behavior technical support aides provide interventions to students. The district must provide specific details showing how each behavior technical support aide’s salary is being funded. This documentation must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison <b>no later than March 22, 2016.</b></p> <p>Based on the district’s action-step document, the district stated that CEIS funds were provided to support the MTSS process for students at risk. The district must provide evidence of how funds were used to support administrators, behavior specialists and teachers to provide “intensive support” to these students in order for them to access education. This documentation must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison <b>no later than March 22, 2016.</b></p> <p>Based on the district’s action-step document, the district stated that based on a review of their data and school trends, the following schools were provided support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atwater Elementary School</li> <li>• Brentwood Elementary School</li> <li>• Emma E. Booker Elementary School</li> <li>• Fruitville Elementary School</li> <li>• Glenallen Elementary School</li> <li>• Garden Elementary School</li> <li>• Tuttle Elementary School</li> </ul> <p>Specifically, the district’s action steps indicated that a report was developed to track suspensions of students within each identified school. The district will review the data collected based on their report during the 2015-16 school year and provide a response to the data results from each identified school. The narrative will include either the next steps to continue to improve overall results or the next steps to improve the results of the identified schools. This documentation must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison <b>no later than March 22, 2016.</b></p>
Status Update	<p>On March 22, 2016, the district provided BEESS with documentation for the required actions related to CEIS over-identification, EBD.</p> <p>The district provided evidence of how funds were used to support instructional aides and paraprofessionals, behavior technical support</p>

	<p>aides, district ESE liaisons and program specialists to provide “intensive support” to students in order for them to access education. Behavior specialists provided behavior analysis and technical support to school personnel. Program specialists participated and assisted in providing interventions to students receiving supports in Tiers 2 and 3. District ESE liaisons also assisted and guided students in Tiers 2 and 3 to prevent over-identification.</p> <p>Upon review of comparative analyses of data and school trends for the first semesters of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years, the district reported a reduction in the number of incidents for OSS, an overall percentage decrease of the number of black students with an OSS, and an overall percentage decrease of the number of students with disabilities with an OSS. In addition, the district is partnering with the PBIS:MTSS Project to assist with data needs and support, which includes an equity profile for each school.</p>
<b>Discipline 4A and 4B</b>	
<p>Summary</p>	<p>With regard to SPP Indicator 4A:</p> <p>In the 2012-13 school year, there were 87 students with disabilities who were suspended or expelled for more than 10 days. The total enrollment of students with disabilities was 6,914.</p> <p>Discipline 4A was a newly identified target area this year for the district. The district’s data from the 2012-13 school year revealed that students with disabilities in the district are 3.027 times more likely to be suspended or expelled for more than 10 days than nondisabled students. The 2013-14 school year data showed the risk ratio increased to <b>3.22</b>.</p> <p>With regard to SPP Indicator 4B:</p> <p>In the 2012-13 school year, there were 43 black students with disabilities who were suspended or expelled for more than 10 days. The total number of black students with disabilities in the district for the same year was 1,056. The total number of nondisabled black students in the district is 37,774, with 157 of those students suspended or expelled for more than 10 days. The district’s data from the 2012-13 school year revealed that black students with disabilities were 9.8 times more likely to be suspended or expelled for more than 10 days when compared to nondisabled black students. Although no inappropriate policies, procedures and practices were identified, this is an area of concern. The 2013-14 school year data showed the risk ratio for discipline 4B decreased to <b>8.5</b>.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>It is recommended that school-based staff and the district continue to monitor the data monthly.</p>
<p>Required Actions</p>	<p>Based on the district’s action steps, a data report was developed to allow the district and individual schools to view suspension and</p>

	<p>expulsion data. Within the district’s action-step document, North Port High School was identified to serve as the district’s pilot school to directly review the data and implement strategies in support of students targeted for need. Specifically, the district stated that North Port High School would establish a student forum to address the area of discipline.</p> <p>Per the district’s action-step document, the district stated that based on information collected from the new OSS or expulsion report, a definitive pattern does exist with regard to suspensions among students with disabilities (discipline 4A), and more specifically of black students with disabilities (discipline 4B). Therefore, the district must provide evidence of at least two student forums throughout the 2015-16 school year. The students included in the forum must be students with disabilities, including black students with disabilities. A narrative of the discussions during at least two student forums must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison <b>no later than March 22, 2016</b>. In addition to a narrative about what was discussed, a narrative of each participating student’s discipline history should also be included.</p> <p>Based on the district’s action steps, the new OSS or expulsion data report recommended that additional support be provided to the following schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booker Middle School</li> <li>• McIntosh Middle School</li> <li>• Heron Creek Middle School</li> <li>• Riverview High School</li> <li>• North Port High School</li> </ul> <p>The district must provide the actions that have occurred during the 2015-16 school year for the above-mentioned schools with regard to improving the areas of discipline 4A and 4B. Evidence of the supports and action steps must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison <b>no later than March 22, 2016</b>.</p>
<p><b>Status Update</b></p>	<p>On March 22, 2016, the district provided BEESS with documentation for the required actions related to discipline 4A and 4B.</p> <p>The district provided evidence of two student forums, one held in December and one held in March of the 2015-16 school year. The students included in the forum were students with disabilities including black students with disabilities. A narrative of these discussions, including each participating student’s discipline history, was included in the documentation.</p> <p>The district provided a report indicating the additional support provided to North Port High School. The school will continue to increase its supports and services for the 2016-17 school year. In addition, the district provided documentation regarding actions that have occurred during the 2015-16 school year to improve the areas of discipline 4A and 4B for the following schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booker Middle School</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heron Creek Middle School</li> <li>• McIntosh Middle School</li> <li>• Riverview High School</li> </ul>
<b>Educational Environment – Least Restrictive Environment</b>	
Summary	<p>The district was targeted for LRE during the 2013-14 monitoring and assistance process due to a rate of 55.9 percent for regular class placement. The state rate was identified as 71.3 percent for regular class placement for students with disabilities. In the 2014-15 school year, the district’s rate of students with disabilities in the regular classroom increased to 64.9 percent, which is below the state rate of 74.4 percent.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Based on comments from the interviews with school administrators and district staff during the 2014-15 on-site visit, the district has made improvements by providing students the opportunity to be placed in the LRE. Specifically, the district closed a separate day school in the south part of the district and those students were moved to a behavioral cluster program at a middle school.</p> <p>It is recommended that the district continue to provide more opportunities for students with disabilities on all school levels to participate in the LRE. In order for this recommendation to be successful, training should be provided to the school administrators and the teachers who will be working more closely with these students.</p>
Required Actions	<p>Based on the district’s action-step document, the district indicated that there are ongoing co-teaching and support facilitation opportunities for English and math classes at the middle and high school levels.</p> <p>During the 2014-15 on-site visit, middle school administrators indicated that students with disabilities who were served in a more restrictive environment in elementary school have a difficult time adjusting when placed in a setting that is more inclusive at the middle-school level.</p> <p>The transition to inclusive education should be planned and should include staff preparation.</p> <p>With regard to staff preparation:</p> <p>The district will identify the elementary schools that have a more restrictive educational setting and the middle schools who would receive the students from these elementary schools. The English and math teachers at both school levels will participate in a group training to prepare for the students involved in transitioning into a less restrictive educational environment in middle school. These trainings can be provided through the district’s FDLRS center and must include the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teaching of regulations, statutes and rules related to</li> </ul>

	<p>providing students with the LRE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher’s LRE responsibilities, including identifying the teacher’s specific role in providing an education to students with disabilities.</li> <li>• A list of what can help a student feel a sense of “belonging.” Everyone wants to feel welcomed and that they “belong,” especially in an environment that is new. All teachers should develop a list of what they can do to assist students in feeling a sense of belonging during their transition to a more inclusive environment.</li> <li>• Understanding supplementary aides and services for students.</li> <li>• The difference between behavior modifications and accommodations and how to implement them.</li> <li>• Descriptions of several supports that can help teachers: co-teaching, support-facilitation, peer-tutoring, use of paraprofessionals and teacher collaboration. It would be helpful for teachers to develop a generic schedule of how they can implement all of these strategies within their school day.</li> <li>• How a teacher can collect data for progress monitoring and what to do with the information.</li> <li>• A list of available district staff, organizational resources and outside resources to assist them in supporting the needs of each of their students.</li> </ul> <p>The district is required to provide evidence that the above-mentioned trainings occurred and include the schools that are mainly impacted with the transitioning of students with disabilities to a more inclusive environment. Required documentation shall include a copy of the presentation for the trainings, a list of all the participants’ names and titles, and copies of the training evaluations indicating the participants’ satisfaction with the trainings. All of this documentation must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison <b>no later than March 22, 2016.</b></p>
<p><b>Status Update</b></p>	<p>On March 22, 2016, the district provided BEESS with documentation for the required trainings for LRE. The district provided training to staff members across the district, including administrators, instructional staff members, paraprofessionals and parents. The trainings focused on creating a smooth transition for students with disabilities from elementary schools to middle schools, as each middle school will provide a continuum of service. In addition, 60 trainings were provided to district and school staff that included information related to accommodations and modifications, differentiated instruction, universal design for learning, strategic instruction model, best practices for inclusion, collaborative teaching in an inclusive environment and understanding student behavior.</p>



<b>Phase 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	By <b>March 25, 2016</b> , the SST, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the district's progress or slippage in the areas of focus and determine additional next steps, as appropriate.
<b>Status Update</b>	<p>On March 22, 2016, the SST, ESE director and designated district staff conducted a phone conference during which the district provided the most current data for CEIS, discipline 4A and 4B, and LRE. In addition, next steps were discussed, which included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to analyze discipline data</li> <li>• Complete equity profiles for each school to analyze and monitor closely</li> <li>• Continue providing professional development for district- and school-level staff based on needs</li> <li>• Complete and implement school-based best practices for inclusive education (BPIE) across the district</li> </ul>

**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 Sarasota County School District.

**Coordinated Early Intervening Services, Over-identification, Black, Emotional Behavioral Disability**

Districts are required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA, Part B funds for CEIS if students of any race are at least **3.5** times more likely to be identified as disabled compared to all other races combined. The district's risk ratio of CEIS over-identification of black students with an EBD using the 2014-15 school year data indicated that black students were 5.07 times more likely to be identified as having an EBD compared to all other races combined. The 2015-16 school year data indicated that black students were **4.29** times more likely to be identified as having an EBD compared to all other races combined, which is a decrease.

Year funds are to be used	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Sarasota	<b>4.19</b>	<b>5.03</b>	<b>5.68</b>	<b>5.07</b>	<b>4.29</b>

**Discipline Risk Ratio 4A**

Discipline indicator 4A identifies the risk of students with disabilities being suspended or expelled for more than 10 days as compared to their nondisabled peers. A risk ratio of 2.0 would mean that students with disabilities are twice as likely to be suspended or expelled for more than 10 days compared to their nondisabled peers. When compared to nondisabled students, students with disabilities in the district were **3.68** times more likely to be suspended or expelled for more than 10 days.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Sarasota	<b>2.82</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>3.68</b>
State	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.33</b>

### Discipline Risk Ratio 4B

Discipline 4B looks at data similar to 4A by race or ethnicity, and includes not only the numerical calculation, but takes into account the district's 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.

Discipline risk ratios for students with disabilities are calculated by first dividing the number of students with disabilities from a specific racial or ethnic group who received OSSs or expulsions totaling more than 10 days, by the total-year enrollment of students with disabilities from the same racial or ethnic group. Second, the number of all nondisabled students who received OSSs or expulsions totaling more than 10 days is divided by the total number of nondisabled students. The risk ratio is calculated by dividing the result of the first step by the result of the second step. A risk ratio of **1.0** indicates that students with disabilities of a given race are no more likely to be suspended or expelled than all nondisabled students. The 2014-15 school year data indicate that students with disabilities in the district whose race is black are **11.56** times more likely to be suspended or expelled than all nondisabled students.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Sarasota	<b>3.76</b>	<b>9.80</b>	<b>8.49</b>	<b>11.56</b>
State	<b>2.67</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.92</b>	<b>2.72</b>

### Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)

To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are to be educated with nondisabled students. These LRE data are calculated by the number of students with disabilities aged 6 through 21 served in the regular class for 80 percent or more of the day, divided 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 in the 2014-15 school year was below the state rate. Subsequent to the on-site visit, BEESS received LRE data for the 2015-16 school year which showed the district's LRE rate increased to **72.5** percent.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Sarasota	<b>55.8%</b>	<b>55.9%</b>	<b>64.9%</b>	<b>72.5%</b>
State	<b>70.7%</b>	<b>71.3%</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>73.0%</b>

## **Interviews Conducted**

### **Administrator Focus Groups**

Members of the SST conducted interviews with administrative staff members from Brentwood Elementary School, Emma E. Booker Elementary School, Booker Middle School and Oak Park School regarding CEIS over-identification, black, EBD; discipline (4A and 4B); and LRE.

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

- A positive referral system is in place to recognize good student behavior, which is reported to parents.
- A student may need to be re-evaluated to determine if he or she is still a student with a disability.
- Administrators support teachers when parents are contacted about student misconduct.
- Often times, the perceived quick fix to disciplinary infractions is to suspend the student.
- Counselors from Camelot Community Care and other outpatient services come to the schools to meet with students. At one school, there is a full-time social worker.
- At one school, all classes have social and emotional instruction built into their schedule to focus on strengthening the students' social skills.
- An effective approach to assisting students with EBD has been to match older students with younger students for mentoring.
- Trauma-informed care training has been provided for the last two years to all teachers and staff.
- At one school, two hours of training on alternatives to discipline is offered each year to bus drivers and their attendants.
- One of the identified barriers to alternatives to suspension is district policy, which requires suspension for certain infractions.
- Elementary schools are more equipped than middle schools in helping students transition back to their home school from a center school.

### **Teacher Focus Groups**

Members of the SST conducted interviews with teachers from Brentwood Elementary School, Emma B. Booker Elementary School, Booker Middle School and Oak Park School regarding CEIS over-identification, black, EBD; discipline (4A and 4B); and LRE.

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

- At one school, students with disabilities are receiving more support in the inclusive setting than when pulled out for services in a resource room.
- Teachers are unclear about Tier 2 and 3 interventions and are not able to identify when a student is involved in each tier. There is a need for consistency in how the Tier 2 and 3 interventions are being provided to students.
- Training is needed for de-escalation of student behavior and other interventions to use instead of restraint.
- Teachers would like to be included in data-based problem solving for determining behavioral interventions for their students.
- Students are unsuccessful when returning to their home school from their separate school, because there is a lack of continuum of supports in place to help with the transition.
- More training is needed on universal design for learning and classroom management for students with behavioral challenges.

- At one school, it is easier to differentiate the students' needs but harder to find the materials with which to serve the students.

### **Instructional Aides and Paraprofessionals Focus Group**

Members of the SST conducted an interview at Emma E. Booker Elementary School with instructional aides and paraprofessional staff who provide Tier 2 and 3 interventions for behavior and assist in the implementation of the students' PBIPs.

Themes that emerged from the focus group included the following:

- More parent-involvement activities at the school are desired.
- There is a positive response regarding the role of behavior technicians on student teams and the behavior plans implemented for the students.
- Optimism is expressed for the MTSS process as it is moving in the right direction but will take time to meet the needs of all students.

### **School Wide Support Team Focus Group**

Members of the SST conducted an interview at Emma E. Booker Elementary School with the SWST regarding CEIS eligibility for i-Ready® screenings for math and reading, social and emotional deficiencies, provision of behavioral technical support, provision of behavior analysis and support, and other certified instructional personnel support related to CEIS over-identification of black students with an EBD.

Themes that emerged from the focus group included the following:

- Tier 1 interventions are more reactive than proactive.
- The SWST and MTSS team are the same and monitor students being provided with Tier 3 interventions.
- Data collected by the teachers are relied upon and SWST has developed its own data collection system that can be used by teachers in the classroom.

### **Student Focus Groups**

Members of the SST conducted student focus groups at Booker Middle School and Oak Park School. The students were asked to share their perspectives on topics such as support from teachers, post-school goals, assistance received to prepare for life after high school, causes of dropout, disciplinary issues and additional resources or services needed.

Comments from the students included the following:

- Compliments from teachers are well received by the students.
- Behavior strategies are taught for when students becoming frustrated.
- At one school, students do not feel supported or respected by their teachers; and at another school, students feel that teachers show favoritism, but the students did not believe it was due to ethnicity.
- Students feel safer in school than in other environments.
- At one school, students enjoy vocational classes and taking care of the outdoor plants throughout the campus.
- IEP team meetings are attended by students, but students are disappointed when their academics are discussed, which are below what the other students are doing.
- None of the students have plans to drop out of school because they do not want to

disappoint others.

- At one school, when students become upset and need to cool down by requesting a “walk and talk,” the requests are not being granted.
- At one school, students feel that the rigor of some courses was not at the same level as for other students taking the same courses at other schools.
- The students believe that the increase in bus incidents is because of the long bus rides, which reportedly average one hour and 45 minutes twice daily.

**School Walk-Through Debriefings**

School walk-through debriefings were conducted at Brentwood Elementary School, Emma E. Booker Elementary School, Booker Middle School and Oak Park School.

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

- Campus grounds were well maintained.
- Staff and students have pride in their campuses as they are involved in the care of the environment.
- Students were engaged in the classroom.
- Behavior tools, guiding principles and reflective language were present in some of the classrooms.
- There was evidence in many classrooms of higher-level learning of the curriculum, not only in core subject areas but also in electives.

**Commendations**

1. The district’s 2014-15 federal uniform high school graduation rate for students with disabilities was 57 percent, which is the same as the state rate.
2. The district’s federal dropout rate for students with disabilities for the 2014-15 school year is 18 percent, which is below the state rate of 19 percent.
3. In the 2014-15 school year, 76 percent of parents that had a child receiving special education services in Grades K-12 reported that schools facilitate parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for students with disabilities, which is above the state rate of 74 percent.
4. The district’s LRE rate for regular class placement has increased steadily since the 2013-14 school year and is 72.5 percent for the 2015-16 school year, while the state rate is 73 percent.

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

Next Steps	
<b>Coordinated Early Intervening Services – Over-identification, Black, Emotional Behavioral Disability</b>	
Summary	The district’s risk ratio of CEIS over-identification of black students with an EBD using the 2014-15 school year data indicated that black students in the district were <b>5.07</b> times more likely to be identified as having an EBD compared to all other races combined. The 2015-16 school year data indicated that black students in the district were

	<b>4.29</b> times more likely to be identified as having an EBD compared to all other races combined, which is a decrease.
Recommendations	The district should monitor and analyze data from schools that have determined students eligible as having an EBD. In addition, the district should monitor data for all students eligible as having an EBD, not just those being newly identified.
Required Actions	<p>The district must compile and review data quarterly regarding CEIS over-identification and engage in data-based problem solving focusing on disproportionality regarding students identified as having an EBD.</p> <p>The quarterly data and a summary of the problem-solving activities must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via <a href="mailto:BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org">BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org</a> by the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>December 14, 2016</b></li> <li>• <b>February 13, 2017</b></li> <li>• <b>April 17, 2017</b></li> </ul>
<b>Discipline 4A</b>	
Summary	The district's data for the 2014-15 school year indicate that students with disabilities, when compared to nondisabled students, were <b>3.68</b> times more likely to be suspended or expelled for more than 10 days (survey 5), which is an increase from the 2013-14 school year rate of <b>3.22</b> .
Recommendations	The district should collaborate with the PBIS Project and district staff to implement problem-solving strategies.
Required Actions	<p>The district must compile and review discipline 4A data quarterly and provide a summary of the problem-solving activities that resulted from this review.</p> <p>The quarterly discipline 4A data and the summary of problem-solving activities must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via <a href="mailto:BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org">BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org</a> by the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>December 14, 2016</b></li> <li>• <b>February 13, 2017</b></li> <li>• <b>April 17, 2017</b></li> </ul>
<b>Discipline 4B</b>	
Summary	The district's data for the 2014-15 school year indicate that students with disabilities whose race is black are <b>11.56</b> times more likely to be suspended or expelled as all nondisabled students, which is an increase of 36.2 percent from the 2013-14 school year.
Recommendations	The district will continue to collaborate with the SST and district staff to implement problem-solving strategies and monitor progress for

	disproportionality. It is recommended that the district continue to collaborate with SEDNET regarding facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and their families.
Required Actions	<p>The district must compile and review 4B data quarterly and provide BEESS with a summary of the problem-solving activities that resulted from this review. In addition, the district must participate in the statewide PBIS Disproportionality Workgroup.</p> <p>The quarterly 4B data and the summary of problem-solving activities must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via <a href="mailto:BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org">BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org</a> by the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>December 14, 2016</b></li> <li>• <b>February 13, 2017</b></li> <li>• <b>April 17, 2017</b></li> </ul>
<b>Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)</b>	
Summary	The district's percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class in the 2014-15 school year was below the state rate. Subsequent to the on-site visit, BEESS received LRE data for the 2015-16 school year which showed the district's LRE rate increased to <b>72.5</b> percent.
Recommendations	It is recommended that the district continue with the implementation of the BPIE Action Plan and continue collaboration with FIN, Technology and Learning Connections for Assistive Technology, and FDLRS in creating professional development opportunities for implementation of universal design for learning and differentiated instruction. This professional development will allow for additional inclusion model classrooms in the district.
Required Actions	None
<b>Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process</b>	
Summary	By <b>March 31, 2017</b> , the SST, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the district's action plan and determine additional next steps, as appropriate, via a scheduled telephone call. The district will provide documentation to their BEESS liaison via <a href="mailto:BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org">BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org</a> prior to the scheduled call.

## Technical Assistance

1. **Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders** (Florida's PBIS Project) may be accessed at [http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/RTIB%20Guide%20101811\\_final.pdf](http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/RTIB%20Guide%20101811_final.pdf) and provides an overview of the critical components of an MTSS for behavior. These critical components describe systems changes that are necessary for a results-driven ESE system.
2. The district's **ESE Policies and Procedures** document provides district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual, physical or mechanical restraint and seclusion developed by the FDOE. The school district's document for the 2013-14 through 2015-16 school years may be accessed at <http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
3. The technical assistance paper entitled **Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Restraint and Seclusion with Students with Disabilities**, dated October 14, 2011, may be accessed at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-6212/dps-2011-165.pdf>. This document provides guidance regarding the use, documenting, reporting and monitoring of restraint and seclusion of students with disabilities in school districts, including (a) when restraint or seclusion might be used, (b) considerations when selecting a training program for restraint, (c) what should be documented, (d) parent notification and reporting, and (e) monitoring use. It also contains information about s. 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities.
4. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released **School Discipline Guidance** in the January 2014, Volume 4, Issue 1 of the **Office of Special Education Programs Monthly Update**. This package will assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. The resource documents listed below are included in the package, and are available at <http://www.ed.gov/school-discipline>.
  - **Dear Colleague** guidance letter on civil rights and discipline,
  - **Guiding Principles** document that draws from emerging research and best practices,
  - **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources** that indexes federal technical assistance and other resources and
  - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations** that catalog state laws and regulations related to school discipline.
5. **The Project 10: Transition Education Network** (<http://project10.info>) 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 and school-based enterprise, service learning and an early warning system.



6. **FDLRS Associate Centers Support** may be accessed at [www.fdlrs.org](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 is 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/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, CHAMPs, Tough Kids, discipline in the secondary classroom, support for parent involvement, Professional Development Alternatives for Positive Behavior Support module, universal design for learning, small-group planning and problem solving, disability awareness, and district specific supports.
7. **PS:Rtl Technology** may be accessed at <http://www.floridarti.usf.edu/index.html>. One function of this project provides regional technology coordinators and technology specialists the support to effectively implement accessible instructional materials, assistive technologies, learning technologies, and universal design for learning principles within all tiers of instruction. This project also manages, coordinates and supports the regional assistive technology loan libraries.

## State Support Team for Sarasota County School District

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