

FINAL REPORT OF VERIFICATION MONITORING OF
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

FRANKLIN COUNTY

JANUARY 26, 2004



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
ESE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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April 27, 2004

Ms. Jo Ann Gander, Superintendent
Franklin County School District
155 Avenue E
Apalachicola, Florida 32320

Dear Superintendent Gander:

Thank you for your hospitality and professionalism during our recent verification monitoring visit on January 26, 2004. During the visit, the district provided a status report in response to the final monitoring report from the April 2002 focused monitoring visit. Visits to selected sites were conducted to verify information shared by the district. Bureau staff has reviewed the additional information collected during the visit and a report of this visit is attached.

While the district has completed many of the strategies of the system improvement plan, the district will be required to revise its continuous improvement monitoring plan in its June 2004 report to incorporate the following findings from this visit:

- measurable goals
- short term objectives or benchmarks
- present levels of performance
- matrix determinations

In addition, the district will be required to submit additional data related to the 2004 spring administration of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

We appreciate your ongoing efforts on behalf of exceptional students.

Sincerely,

Michele Polland

Michele Polland, Acting Chief
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

cc: Brenda Wilson
Eileen Amy
Kim Komisar

MICHELE POLLAND
Acting Chief
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

**Franklin County Final Monitoring Report
Verification Monitoring Visit
January 26, 2004**

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Franklin County School District Verification Monitoring Visit January 26, 2003

On January 26, 2004, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, conducted an on-site verification review of the exceptional student education (ESE) programs in Franklin County Public Schools. The primary purpose for conducting verification visits to districts previously monitored is to afford school districts an opportunity to offer validation of the activities they have undertaken through their system improvement plans. These visits provide an assurance to the Bureau that the strategies agreed to in the improvement plans are being implemented. They also give districts an opportunity to demonstrate progress, as well as for districts to request additional technical assistance regarding the implementation of their system improvement plans.

Franklin County was selected for monitoring in 2002 on the basis of its rate of participation in statewide assessments for students with disabilities. The results of the verification visit are reported under the following categories or related areas that were included in the final monitoring report of the focused monitoring visit conducted April 22-26, 2002:

- testing and instructional accommodations
- access to the general education curriculum
- preparation of students to take the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)
- staff knowledge and training
- decision making
- routine assessments
- stakeholder opinions related to the key indicator
- student records review
- district forms review

Site Visit

The primary on-site activity conducted as part of the verification monitoring visit was a demonstration by the district of the strategies implemented thus far through the system improvement plan developed as result of the 2002 focused monitoring process. The components of the demonstration were determined by the district based on the areas targeted for improvement, and the types of activities conducted by the district. Brenda Wilson, Director of Administrative Services, served as the coordinator and point of contact for the district during the monitoring visit. Ms. Wilson discussed the district's strategies for implementing the system improvement plan during an interview with Bureau staff at the district office. No other district staff participated in this interview.

In addition to the district level interview, the verification visit included visits to Apalachicola High School and Carabelle High School. The purpose of these visits was to validate information provided during the district presentation and to conduct compliance monitoring in the areas of individual educational plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities, the provision of counseling as a related service, and the provision of speech and language services. School site visits included:

- interviews with 2 selected school staff at Apalachicola High School
- interviews with 2 selected staff at Carabelle High School.
- reviews of 10 IEPs for students with disabilities
- reviews of two matrix of services documents

Results

Testing and Instructional Accommodations

In 2002, the district was selected for monitoring based on low participation of students with disabilities in statewide assessments as reported for the 2000-2001 school year. However, by the time of the April 2002 onsite monitoring visit it appeared that participation of students with disabilities in the FCAT had increased significantly.

A comparison of the percentage of students who participated in the FCAT in fourth, eighth, and tenth grades for the 2000-01 school year and the 2002-03 school year is given below:

	2000-01	2002-03		2000-01	2002-03
Reading			Math		
Grade 4	53%	83%	Grade 5	39%	77%
Grade 8	29%	73%	Grade 8	29%	73%
Grade 10	47%	77%	Grade 10	47%	69%

Based on these results, Franklin County has made substantial progress in improving the rate of participation of students with disabilities.

It was reported that the staffing specialist meets with ESE teachers and selected general education teachers to ensure that ESE students are receiving the appropriate testing accommodations. A district testing accommodations form is completed for every ESE student and is disseminated to participating parents at every IEP meeting. During the 2003 school year, a random sample of student records was selected and IEP accommodations were verified by classroom instruction and interviews.

Access to the General Education Curriculum

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of general education curriculum indicated that some students with disabilities did not have access to the general math curriculum.

Ms. Wilson indicated that the district is addressing access to the general education curriculum in the Franklin County School District System Improvement Plan through an inclusionary model implemented this past year at the middle and high school levels.

Preparation of Students for FCAT Participation

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report related to the preparation of students to take the FCAT.

Staff Knowledge and Training

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of staff knowledge and training were related to the need for effective teacher training in the implementation of testing accommodations.

The director reported that a variety of staff development activities were planned and delivered. The Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) staff provided training on the district's 2003-04 Admissions and Placement Manual, which had been revised to strengthen the IEP development and review sections to stay current with trends in increasing FCAT participation and providing accommodations. The staffing specialist reported that random observations of ESE classroom instruction were conducted to ensure that testing accommodations on IEPs were carried out in classes. Subsequent consultation was conducted with counselors and ESE teachers about the need to ensure the consistency between classroom accommodations and FCAT accommodations. Data related to these observations was unavailable at the time of this verification monitoring visit. A random sample of IEPs was reviewed for compliance in this area. No discrepancies between classroom accommodations and FCAT accommodations were detected.

Interviews with school level staff indicated that there is strong communication between district, school level testing coordinators, and ESE teachers regarding testing accommodations.

Decision-Making

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of decision-making.

Routine Assessments

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of routine assessments.

Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Key Indicator

There were no findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of stakeholder opinions related to the key indicator.

Student Records Review

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report in the area of student record reviews included several areas found to be systemic in nature. These areas included:

- measurable annual goals
- short-term objectives or benchmarks
- present levels of performance
- goals and objectives which do not support the services on the IEP
- the effect of the disability on involvement in the general curriculum
- supports for school personnel

Strategies implemented to address the systemic findings related to IEPs included teacher inservice on the district's Admissions and Placement Manual in which the district stressed the results of the 2002 monitoring, and reviewed the district's system improvement plan. The district also reported that staff monitored selected IEPs and provided one-to-one assistance to teachers who needed additional training.

The review of 10 individual educational plans (IEPs) of students with disabilities during the verification visit found that six of the IEPs reviewed lacked a majority of measurable annual goals. This will require that the IEP teams reconvene to address the goals and related short-term objectives or benchmarks. In addition, three of these IEPs indicated inadequate statements of present levels of performance. The district was given the names of these students in a letter dated February 24, 2004.

There were no additional findings related to:

- goals and objectives which do not support the services on the IEP
- the effect of a disability on involvement in the general curriculum

A review of two matrix of services documents for students reported at the 254 and 255 cost factors was conducted. Information gained through the IEP review confirmed the implementation of services for the student reported at the 254 matrix cost factor. However, the documentation provided for the other student did not support the 255 cost factor. The district will be required to correct the data for that student through the Automated Student Information System database for survey 2 for the 2003-04 school year. The name and student number of that student was also provided in the aforementioned letter.

District Forms Review

Findings from the 2002 monitoring report indicated that two forms required revision. These forms were revised and the revisions were approved in August, 2002. There were no further findings in this area.

Additional Compliance

In addition to monitoring categories related to the 2002 final report, the Bureau also conducted interviews related to the provision of speech and language services and counseling as a related service. Through interviews and record reviews, it was reported that language and communication goals are generally addressed as needed on the IEP. Services to address communication needs are provided by the ESE teachers through the language arts curriculum. The ESE teachers indicated that the district's speech and language pathologist was available for informal consultation as needed.

Through interviews, it appears that the provision of counseling as a related service is available to all ESE students, including gifted. Services to address counseling needs are documented on the IEP and are provided by both school staff and a local agency, Franklin Counseling Behavior Services.

Summary

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services conducted a verification monitoring visit to Franklin County District Schools on January 26, 2004. The visit served to verify that the district had adequately met all requirements of the system improvement plan developed as a result of the focused monitoring visit in April, 2002.

Through interviews and on-site visits, the district demonstrated improvement in most areas. All requirements have been met in the following categories:

- testing and instructional accommodations
- access to the general curriculum
- preparation of students to take the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)
- staff knowledge and training
- decision making
- routine assessments
- stakeholder opinions related to the key indicator
- district forms reviews

Interviews with school level staff generally indicated that decisions regarding testing accommodations were based on individual student need as indicated on the accommodations form and on the IEP. One high school teacher, however, indicated that all ESE students in grades 9-12 received extended time accommodations. School level interviews also indicated that school site decisions as to whether or not a student with disabilities would participate in the FCAT were strongly influenced by parent preference.

Areas in which continued improvement is required must be addressed in the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. The area demonstrating continued need is IEP development specifically the following components:

- measurable annual goals
- short-term objectives or benchmarks
- present levels of performance
- matrix determinations

In an ongoing effort to address the identified areas of need, Ms. Wilson indicated that PAEC was scheduled to provide additional trainings in February 2004 focusing on quality IEP development, specifically addressing the writing of measurable annual goals. In order to measure the effectiveness of the IEP training, the district will be required to conduct a self-assessment of 10 IEPs, using the Bureau's review protocols and sourcebook. The results of this review, as well as the revised plan, must be included in the district's status report submitted in June 2004. In addition, the district will also be required to submit additional data related to the Spring 2004 administration of FCAT.