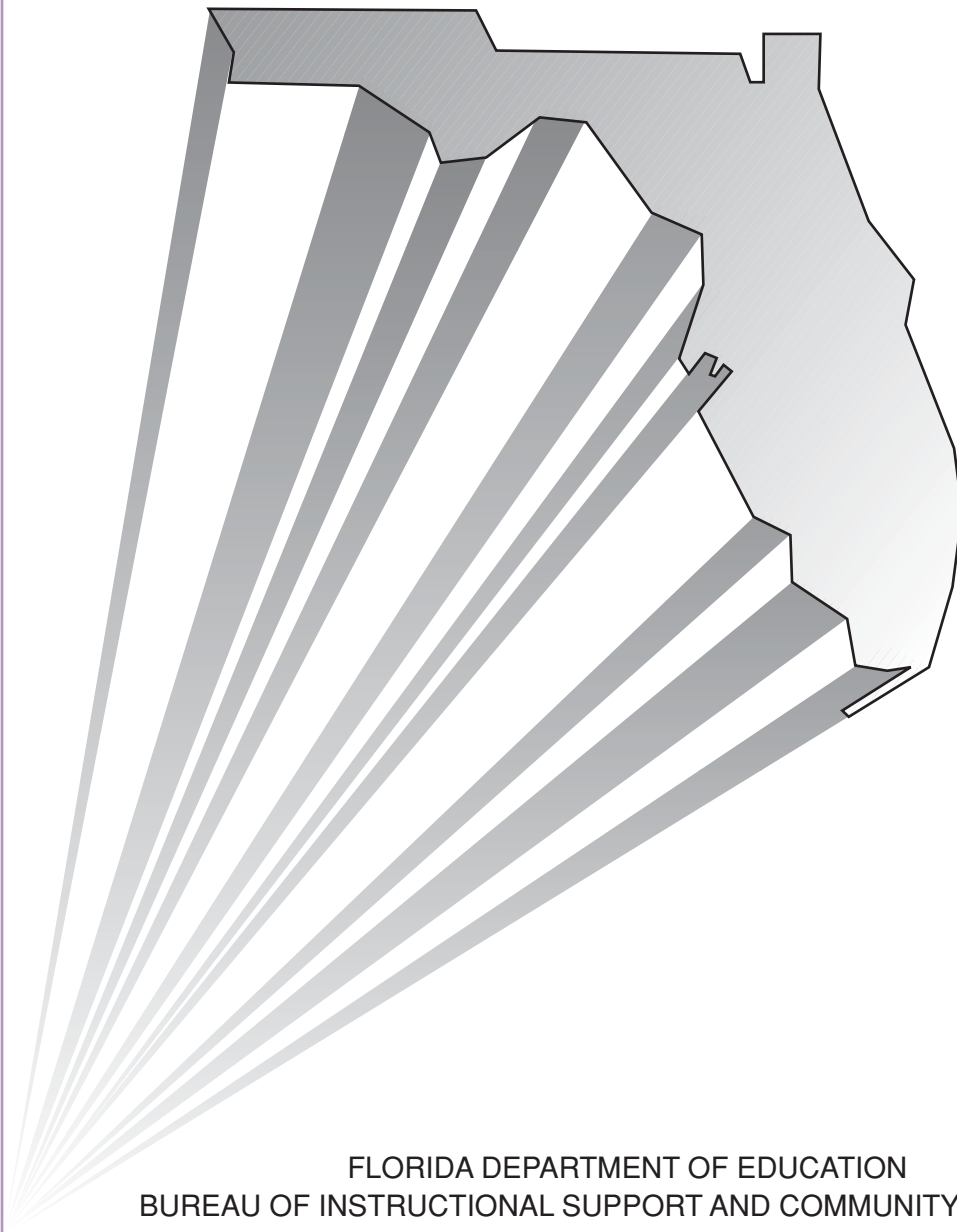


FINAL REPORT OF FOCUSED MONITORING OF  
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

# HIGHLANDS COUNTY

APRIL 28 - MAY 1, 2003



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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November 3, 2003

Mr. Wally Cox, Superintendent  
Highlands County School District  
426 School Street  
Sebring, Florida 33870-4098

Dear Superintendent Cox:

We are pleased to provide you with the Final Report of Focused Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs in Highlands County. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information including student record reviews; interviews with school and district staff; information from focus groups; and parent, teacher, and student survey data from our visit on April 28-May 1, 2003. The report includes a System Improvement Plan outlining the findings of the monitoring team. The final report will be placed on the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services' website and may be viewed at [www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm).

The Bureau has sent Connie Tzovarras, ESE Director, an electronic copy of the System Improvement Plan for development. Within 30 days of the receipt of this electronic copy, the district is required to submit the completed System Improvement Plan for review by our office. Bureau staff will work with Connie Tzovarras and her staff to develop the required system improvement measures, including strategies and activities to address the areas of concern and noncompliance identified in the report. We anticipate that some of the action steps that will be implemented will be long term in duration, and will require time to assess the measure of effectiveness. In addition, as appropriate, plans related to the district's continuous improvement monitoring may also relate to action steps proposed in response to this report. After the System Improvement Plan has been approved, it will also be placed on the Bureau's website.

**SHAN GOFF**

*K-12 Deputy Chancellor for Student Achievement*

Mr. Wally Cox  
November 3, 2003  
Page 2

An update of outcomes achieved and/or a summary of related activities, as identified in your district's plan, must be submitted by June 30 and December 30 of each school year for the next two years, unless otherwise noted on the plan. A follow-up monitoring visit to your district will take place two years after your original monitoring visit.

If my staff can be of any assistance as you implement the system improvement plan, please contact Eileen L. Amy, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance Administrator. Mrs. Amy may be reached at 850/245-0476, or via electronic mail at [Eileen.Amy@fldoe.org](mailto:Eileen.Amy@fldoe.org).

Thank you for your continuing commitment to improve services for exceptional education students in Highlands County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shan Goff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "G".

Shan Goff, Chief  
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

Enclosure

**Highlands County Final Monitoring Report  
 Focused Monitoring Visit  
 April 28-May 1, 2003**

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**Highlands County School District**  
**Focused Monitoring Visit**  
**April 28-May 1, 2003**

**Executive Summary**

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, 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 laws and rules (Sections 1001.03(8) and 1008.32, Florida Statutes (F.S.)). In fulfilling this requirement, the Bureau conducts monitoring activities of the exceptional student education (ESE) programs provided by district school boards in accordance with Sections 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and programs of exceptional student education (ESE); provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (Section 300.1(d) of the Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)), and districts are required to make a good faith effort to assist children with disabilities to achieve their stated goals and objectives in the least restrictive environment (34 CFR Sections 300.350(a)(2) and 300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA are carried out and that each educational program for children with disabilities administered in the state meets the educational requirements of the state (34 CFR Section 300.600(a)(1) and (2)).

During the week of April 28, 2003, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, conducted an on-site review of the exceptional student education programs in Highlands County Public Schools. Connie Tzovarras, Director, Exceptional Student Education, served as the coordinator and point of contact for the district during the monitoring visit. In its continuing efforts to focus the monitoring process on student educational outcomes, the Bureau has identified four key data indicators: percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers); dropout rate for students with disabilities; percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma; and, participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities. Highlands County was selected for monitoring on the basis of its dropout rate for students with disabilities. The results of the monitoring process are reported under six categories or topical issues that are considered to impact or contribute to the key data indicator. In addition, information related to services for gifted students and the results of records and forms reviews are reported.

## **Summary of Findings**

### **General Information**

The majority of students with disabilities in Highlands County who have recently dropped out of school are eligible for programs for students who have specific learning disabilities (SLD) or who are emotionally handicapped or severely emotionally disturbed (EH/SED), and were

pursuing a special diploma at the time that they dropped out. The most common reasons given for students with disabilities dropping out of high school were withdrawal for nonattendance, court action, and lack of enrollment at the start of the school year.

### **Administration and Policy**

Highlands County should be commended for their extensive dropout retrieval activities, which include instructional and placement alternatives. Attendance policies and procedures are generally effective, but are not fully understood by all staff or consistently implemented across the district. There are relatively high rates of students being absent for 21 or more days in a school year at Fred Wild Elementary School, Lake Placid Middle School, Sebring Middle School, and Avon Park High School. While there are effective alternative education initiatives in place at individual schools, there is a need for transition assistance or continued support as students in the alternative programs move to middle school or return to their home school. Finally, a data quality review is needed to ensure that data reported by the district is accurate.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

Instruction was consistently judged to be appropriate in the classrooms observed, and teachers reported that they receive ample support in the way of resources and training. The use of the Literacy First program is reported by staff to have a positive effect on instruction across subject areas, and the Second Step curriculum is effective in helping at-risk students develop affective communication and social skills. The monitors noted a concern in the area of curriculum and instruction involving vocational training options. While vocational training programs are available, and the job placement program for students with disabilities at the high school is reported to be successful, there continues to be a need for increased access to meaningful vocational programs for students with disabilities.

### **Discipline and Classroom Management**

Although the monitoring team noted effective classroom management in all classes observed, interviews with administrative staff and reviews of school-level data on student referrals and suspensions indicates that disciplinary procedures are an area of concern that may be affecting the dropout rate. An analysis of school- and student-level data related to types of infractions and consequences reported, and the specific students or staff members involved, would be useful to the district in the development of a strategy to address the high discipline rates across the district.

### **Staff Development**

Extensive staff development opportunities are available in Highlands County, although none directly state drop out prevention as the purpose. Reading is a particularly important topic currently, as well as training related to inclusion. Training in positive behavioral supports and crisis intervention are routinely provided to interested staff. It was generally expressed that school staff have ample exposure to training related to curriculum, instruction, and behavior management, and that, as a result, lack of expertise in these areas does not contribute to the dropout rate. As noted in the preceding sections, this may be true of curriculum and instruction, but behavior and discipline are areas of concern.

### **Parental Involvement**

The school district provides a substantial number and range of activities designed to encourage



parental involvement in their children’s education, including providing transportation and conducting home visits. Despite this, parental participation is seen as an area of concern, particularly in regard to students considered at-risk of dropping out.

### **Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities**

In general, possible causes for, or contributing factors to, the dropout rate for students with disabilities cited by district and school staff fall into the following categories: inaccurate data reporting; lenient attendance policies that encourage students to miss school; lack of meaningful vocational programs for some students with disabilities; lack of motivation to pursue a diploma; and, the level of poverty and the rural nature of the district do not support students remaining in school.

### **Gifted**

Highlands County provides services to gifted students in elementary, middle, and high school, through enrollment in special classes, consultative services, advanced courses at the high school level, and dual enrollment. A scope and sequence curriculum for the gifted program is currently being developed. For its continuous improvement plan the district has targeted disproportionate representation of racial/ethnic minority students in the gifted program.

### **Record Reviews**

During the formal record reviews carried out as a part of the focused monitoring procedures, 24 individual educational plans (IEPs) were reviewed for compliance. There were no findings of noncompliance that resulted in a funding adjustment. Eleven of the IEPs must be reconvened due to a lack of a majority of measurable annual goals. Systemic findings of noncompliance on IEPs were noted in four areas, and individual findings were noted in 13 additional areas. Two educational plans (EPs) for gifted students were reviewed for compliance. Both plans included an implementation date, but the development dates were left blank, and none of the outcomes included an evaluation. Additional information, including identification of the specific student records in question, has been provided to the district under separate cover.

### **Forms Reviews**

Forms representing the following actions were found to require modification or revision:

- IEP forms
- Notice and Consent for Initial Placement
- Notification of Change of Placement
- Notification of Change of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)
- Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination
- Informed Notice of Dismissal
- Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement
- Annual Notice of Confidentiality

### **System Improvement Plan**

In response to these findings, the district is required to develop a system improvement plan for submission to the Bureau. This plan must include activities and strategies intended to address

specific findings, as well as measurable evidence of change. In developing the system improvement plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement activities resulting from this focused monitoring report to the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. The format for the system improvement plan, including a listing of the critical issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement, is provided with this executive summary.

During the process of conducting the focused monitoring activities, including daily debriefings with the monitoring team and district staff, it is often the case that suggestions and/or recommendations related to interventions or strategies are proposed. Listings of these recommendations as well as specific discretionary projects and DOE contacts available to provide technical assistance to the district in the development and implementation of the plan also are included as part of this report.

## Highlands County School District Focused Monitoring System Improvement Plan

This section includes the issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement. The district is required to provide system improvement strategies to address identified findings, which may include an explanation of specific activities the district has committed to implementing, or it may consist of a broader statement describing planned strategies. For each issue, the plan also must define the measurable evidence of whether or not the desired outcome has been achieved. Target dates that extend for more than one year should include benchmarks in order to track interim progress. Findings identified as “ESE” are those findings that reflect issues specific to ESE students. Findings identified as “All” are those findings that reflect issues related to the student population as a whole, including ESE students.

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
5 Administration and Policy	A data quality review is needed to ensure that data reported by the district is accurate.		X		
	Follow-up information related to the status of students who have been reported as dropouts is not consistently reflected in the district database.		X		
	Attendance policies and procedures are generally effective, but are not fully understood by all staff or consistently implemented across the district.		X		

<b>Category</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>ESE</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>System Improvement Strategy</b>	<b>Evidence of Change and Target Date</b>
	There are relatively high rates of students being absent for 21 or more days in a school year at Fred Wild Elementary School, Lake Placid Middle School, Sebring Middle School, and Avon Park High School.		X		
	While there are effective alternative education initiatives in place at individual schools, there is a need for transition assistance or continued support as students in the alternative programs move to middle school or return to their home school.		X		
Curriculum and Instruction	Access to vocational programs is limited for some students with disabilities who read below grade level, and there is a reliance on computer-based instructional modules that may not be effective for students with disabilities.	X			
Discipline and Classroom Management	An analysis of school- and student-level data related to types of infractions and consequences reported, and the		X		

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
	specific students or staff members involved, is needed to develop a strategy to address the high discipline rates across the district.				
Staff Development	There is a comprehensive system of staff development in place; the district must ensure that staff participate in appropriate training opportunities, in particular those related to behavior and discipline.		X		
Parental Involvement	No significant findings.				
Gifted Services	No significant findings.				
Records Reviews	Eleven IEPs must be reconvened due to a lack of a majority of measurable annual goals.	X			
	Two EPs were missing required components.	X			
	Findings of noncompliance on IEPs primarily were related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>which IEP team member served as the interpreter of instructional implications</li> </ul>	X			

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of measurable annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks</li> <li>• inadequate present level of education performance statement</li> <li>• lack of correspondence between the annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks and the needs identified on the present level of performance statement</li> </ul>				
∞ Forms Reviews	<p>Forms used to document the following activities must be revised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Notification of Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting</li> <li>• IEP forms</li> <li>• Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</li> <li>• Notification of Change of Placement</li> <li>• Notification of Change of FAPE</li> <li>• Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Dismissal</li> </ul>	X			

<b>Category</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>ESE</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>System Improvement Strategy</b>	<b>Evidence of Change and Target Date</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement</li> <li>• Annual Notice of Confidentiality</li> </ul>				





# Monitoring Process

## Authority

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, 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 laws and rules (Sections 1001.03(8) and 1008.32, Florida Statutes (F.S.)). In fulfilling this requirement, the Bureau conducts monitoring activities of the exceptional student education (ESE) programs provided by district school boards in accordance with Sections 1001.42 and 1003.57, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the Bureau examines and evaluates procedures, records, and programs of exceptional student education (ESE); provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (Section 300.1(d) of the Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and districts are required to make a good faith effort to assist children with disabilities to achieve their stated goals and objectives in the least restrictive environment (34 CFR §§300.350(a)(2) and §300.556). In accordance with the IDEA the Department is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA are carried out and that each educational program for children with disabilities administered in the state meets the educational requirements of the state (34 CFR §300.600(a)(1) and (2)).

The monitoring system established to oversee exceptional student education (ESE) programs reflects the Department's commitment to provide assistance and service to school districts. The system is designed to emphasize improved outcomes and educational benefits for students while continuing to conduct those activities necessary to ensure compliance with applicable federal and state laws, rules, and regulations. The system provides consistency with other state efforts, including the State Improvement Plan required by the IDEA. A description of the development of the current monitoring system in Florida is provided in appendix A.

## Focused Monitoring

The purpose of the focused monitoring process is to implement a methodology that targets the Bureau's monitoring intervention on key data indicators that were identified as significant for educational outcomes for students. Through this process, the Bureau will use such data to inform the monitoring process, thereby implementing a strategic approach to intervention and commitment of resources that will improve student outcomes.

## Key Data Indicators

Four key data indicators were recommended by the monitoring stakeholders' workgroup and were adopted for implementation by the Bureau. The key data indicators for the 2003 school year and their sources of data are as follows:

- percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers) [Data source: Survey 9]
- dropout rate for students with disabilities [Data source: Survey 5]

- percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma [Data source: Survey 5]
- participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities [Data sources: performance data from the assessment files and Survey 3 enrollment data]

### **District Selection**

Districts were selected to be monitored based on a review of data from the 2001-02 school year that was submitted electronically to the Department of Education (DOE) Information Database for Surveys 2, 3, 5, 9, and from the assessment files. This data is compiled into an annual data profile for each district (LEA Profile). The 2003 LEA profiles for all Florida school districts are available on the web at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/datapage.htm>.

In making the decision to include Highlands County in this year's focused monitoring visits, Bureau staff reviewed data related to the dropout rate for students with disabilities from survey 5. This review indicated that Highlands County's rate of 8.3% approached the highest dropout rate for students with disabilities for all districts in the state. Highlands County School District's LEA profile and the listing of districts rank-ordered on dropout rate for students with disabilities is included in this report as appendix B.

### **Sources of Information**

#### **On-Site Monitoring Activities**

The Bureau conducted the on-site focused monitoring visit from April 28 through May 1, 2003. Six Bureau staff members, one contracted staff member, and two peer monitors conducted site-visits to the following six schools:

- Woodlawn Elementary School
- Lake Placid Middle School
- Avon Park Middle School
- Sebring High School
- Avon Park High School
- The Academy at Youth Care Lane

Peer monitors are exceptional student education personnel from other school districts who are trained to assist with the DOE's monitoring activities. In addition, four University of Miami research staff conducted focus group interviews. A listing of all participating monitors is provided as appendix C.

#### **Interviews**

Interviews with selected district- and school-level personnel are conducted to gather information from multiple sources about the key data indicator. In addition to the protocol developed specifically to examine dropout rate for students with disabilities, separate protocols are used to address services to gifted students. If a school district includes public charter schools or Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities, separate interview protocols are used to interview staff in those settings. In Highlands County, interviews were conducted with 53 people, including 8 district-level administrators or support staff, 15 school-level administrators or

support staff, 18 ESE teachers, and 12 general education teachers. Currently, there are no charter schools or DJJ programs in the district.

### ***Focus Group Interviews***

Focus groups for parents, teachers, and students are conducted by the University of Miami to gather information related to the participation rate in statewide assessments. In order to provide maximum opportunity for input about the district's ESE services, a minimum of four separate focus group interviews are conducted. The participant groups include: parents of students with disabilities; teachers and other service providers (ESE and general education); students with disabilities who are pursuing a standard diploma, and students with disabilities who are pursuing a special diploma. Separate sessions are conducted for each participant group.

In conjunction with the 2003 Highlands County School District monitoring activities, seven parents participated in the parent focus group, representing five students with disabilities in elementary, middle, and high school. Eight participants representing elementary, middle, and high school attended the teacher focus group. Participants included two ESE teachers, one general education teacher, two guidance counselors, one career placement specialist, one dropout prevention specialist, and one disciplinary specialist. There were 17 participants in the standard diploma student focus group, and 13 participants in the focus group for students pursuing a special diploma.

### ***Student Case Studies***

Student case studies are conducted for the purpose of performing an in-depth review of the services a student receives in accordance with his or her IEP. The on-site selection of students for the case studies at each school is based on criteria that have been identified as being characteristic of students at risk of dropping out. As part of this process, the student's records are reviewed, Bureau staff or peer monitors may observe the case study student in class, and teachers are interviewed regarding the implementation of the student's IEP. In-depth case studies were conducted for nine students in Highlands County.

### ***Classroom Visits***

Classroom visits are conducted in both ESE and general education classrooms. Some visits are conducted in conjunction with individual student case studies, while others are conducted as general observations of classrooms that include exceptional students. Curriculum and instruction, classroom management and discipline, and classroom design and resources are observed during the general classroom visits. A total of 12 ESE and 10 regular education classrooms were visited during the focused monitoring visit to Highlands County.

### ***Off-Site Monitoring Activities***

Surveys are designed by the University of Miami research staff in order to provide maximum opportunity for input about the district's ESE services from parents of students with disabilities and students identified as gifted, ESE and regular education teachers, and students with disabilities in grades 9-12. Results of the surveys are discussed in the body of this report. Data from each of the surveys are included as appendix D.

### ***Parent Surveys***

The survey that is sent to parents is printed in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole where applicable. It includes a cover letter and a postage paid reply envelope. In addition, the survey to parents of students with disabilities includes a notice regarding the opportunity to participate in a focus group.

In conjunction with the 2003 Highlands County School District monitoring activities, the parent survey was sent to parents of 2,031 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 231 parents (PK, n=17; K-5, n=94; 6-8, n=69; 9-12, n=51) representing 11% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 71 families were returned as undeliverable, representing 3% of the sample for students with disabilities.

For gifted students, the survey was sent to parents of 445 students identified as gifted for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 111 parents (K-5, n=34; 6-8, n=41; 9-12, n=36) representing 25% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 8 families were returned as undeliverable, representing 2% of the sample.

### ***Teacher Surveys***

Surveys developed for teachers and other service providers were mailed to each school, with a memo explaining the key data indicator and the monitoring process. All teachers, both general education and ESE, were provided an opportunity to respond. Surveys were returned from 423 teachers (59% of all teachers in the district), representing all 15 of the schools in Highlands County.

### ***Student Surveys***

A sufficient number of surveys were provided to allow all students with disabilities, grades 9-12, to respond. Instructions for administration of the survey by classroom teachers, including a written script, were provided for each class or group of students. Since participation in this survey is not appropriate for some students whose disabilities might impair their understanding of the survey, professional judgment is used to determine appropriate participants. Surveys were received from 209 students with disabilities in grades 9-12 in the district, representing 31% of the sample. Data are from 3 of the district's 4 schools with students in grades 9-12.

### ***Reviews of Student Records and District Forms***

Prior to the on-site monitoring visit, Bureau staff conducts a compliance review of student records that are randomly selected from the population of exceptional students. The record of at least one student with a matrix rating of 254 or 255 may be reviewed at each school during the on-site visit, if available. In addition to the compliance reviews, selected student records are reviewed at the school site in conjunction with student case studies and classroom visits. In Highlands County, 26 records were reviewed for compliance prior to the visit, and three matrices were reviewed on-site.

In addition, Bureau staff review selected district forms and notices to determine if the required components are included. The results of the review of student records and district forms are described in this report.

## **Reporting Process**

### **Interim Reports**

Daily debriefing sessions are conducted by the monitoring team members in order to review findings, as well as to determine if there is a need to address additional issues or visit additional sites. Preliminary findings and concerns are shared with the ESE director and/or designee through daily debriefings with the monitoring team leader during the monitoring visit. In addition, the district ESE director is invited to attend the final team debriefing with Bureau staff and peer monitors. During the course of these activities, suggestions for interventions or strategies to be incorporated into the district's system improvement plan may be proposed. Within two weeks of the visit, Bureau administrative staff conduct a telephone conference with the ESE director to review major findings.

### **Preliminary Report**

Subsequent to the on-site visit, Bureau staff prepare a written report. The report is developed to include the following elements: an executive summary, a description of the monitoring process, and the results section. A description of the development of the current monitoring system for exceptional student education is included as an appendix. Other appendices with data specific to the district also accompany each report. The report is sent to the district ESE director. The director will have the opportunity to discuss and clarify with Bureau staff any concerns regarding the report before it becomes final.

### **Final Report**

Upon final review and revision by Bureau staff based on input from the ESE director, the final report is issued. The report is sent to the district, and is posted to the Bureau's website at [www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/mon-home.htm).

Within 30 days of the district's receipt of the final report, the system improvement plan, including activities targeting specific findings, must be submitted to the Bureau for review. In developing this plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement plan for focused monitoring to the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. In collaboration with Bureau staff, the district is encouraged to develop methods that correlate activities in order to utilize resources, staff, and time in an efficient manner in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Upon approval of the system improvement plan, the plan is posted on the website noted above.



## **Reporting of Information**

The data generated through the surveys, focus group interviews, individual interviews, case studies, and classroom visits are summarized in this report. The results from the review of student records and district forms are also presented in this report. This report provides conclusions with regard to the key data indicator and specifically addresses topical issues that may contribute to or impact the indicator. For the dropout rate for students with disabilities, these include the following:

- administration and policy
- curriculum and instruction
- discipline and classroom management
- staff development
- parental involvement
- stakeholder opinion related to the indicator

In addition, information related to services for gifted students, the results of the records reviews, and the results of the forms reviews are reported.

To the extent possible, this report focuses on systemic issues rather than on isolated instances of noncompliance or need for improvement. Systemic issues are those that occur at a sufficient enough frequency that the monitoring team could reasonably infer a system-wide problem. Findings are presented in a preliminary report, and the district has the opportunity to clarify items of concern. In a collaborative effort between the district and Bureau staff, system improvement areas are identified. Findings are addressed through the development of strategies for improvement, and evidence of change will be identified as a joint effort between the district and the Bureau. Strategies that are identified as long-term approaches toward improving the district's issue related to the key data indicator are also addressed through the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan.

## **Results**

### **General Information**

This section provides demographic and background information specific to the district as well as information regarding the identification of students with disabilities who are most likely to drop out. Highlands County School District has a total school population of 11,428 (PreK-12), with 18% identified as students with disabilities (including 2% identified eligible as speech impaired only), and 4% identified as gifted.

Highlands County is considered a "small/middle" district and is one of 14 districts in this enrollment group. Respondents reported that Highlands County is essentially a rural community. Based on data reported to DOE, 57% of the students in Highlands County are eligible for free or reduced lunch, compared to 44% across the state as a whole. Highlands County School District is comprised of eight elementary schools, four middle schools, three high schools, and one alternative school.

Data provided by the district detailed the dropout information for the 2001-02 school year for students enrolled at Avon Park High School, Sebring High School, the Academy at Youth Care Lane, and Jail Services/Afterschool Program. No students were reported as dropping out of Lake Placid High School during that time. A review of the data indicated that a total of 66 students were reported to the DOE as having dropped out of high school in Highlands County during the 2001-02 school year. Further investigation by the district revealed that 20 of those students should have had their withdrawal codes revised to reflect withdrawals that do not reflect dropout status (e.g., enrolled in adult education, reenrolled in another district, graduated with a special diploma). For the 46 remaining students, withdrawals were due to the following: nonattendance (18); court action (11); did not enter at the start of the school year (9); other (6); unknown (1); and, leaving school voluntarily with no intention of returning (1).

Of the 46 students with disabilities who dropped out during the 2001-02 school year, 20 were identified as SLD, 16 as EH/SED, and 7 as educable mentally handicapped (EMH). In addition, one was eligible as orthopedically impaired (OI), one as trainable mentally handicapped (TMH), and one as speech impaired (SI). The majority of the students (27) were pursuing a special diploma at the time that they dropped out. A review of several student records revealed that some students are “chronic dropouts” (i.e., they are repeatedly withdrawn for nonattendance or for other reasons, and then reenroll). Some students were noted to have been recorded as dropouts during three consecutive school years.

In summary, the majority of students with disabilities in Highlands County who have recently dropped out of school are identified as SLD or EH/SED, and they were pursuing a special diploma at the time of their withdrawal. The most common reasons given for students with disabilities dropping out of high school were withdrawal for nonattendance, court action, and lack of enrollment at the start of the school year.

### **Administration and Policy**

This category refers to school or district policies and procedures that may affect the dropout rate for students with disabilities. Bureau staff and peer monitors noted that the most significant finding to emerge from the visit to Highlands County was that school and district staff expend considerable effort on behalf of dropout retrieval activities. Across the district, a significant amount of time and resources are committed to tracking student achievement and attendance in an effort to ensure that appropriate services are available for students who have dropped out or who are at-risk of doing so. Some of these activities include: liberal use of school choice options, especially at the high school level; options for attending school after the traditional school day; use of a variety of curricular and instructional options to effectively target student needs; transportation provided for students to attend South Florida Community College (SFCC); teacher and staff contact with parents regarding attendance; contacting students who have dropped out to encourage them to return to school; and, home visits by school social workers, among others. The district should be commended for these efforts.

During the interview process, district staff noted that data correction procedures related to student withdrawal codes are not consistently carried out, and that this may affect the reported dropout rate. While student withdrawal codes may be corrected at any time during the year, data



is disseminated to districts by the DOE twice during the school year, following survey 2 and survey 5, through the use of the Student Dropout Match Information Format (additional information is available through the Education Information and Accountability Services at [www.firm.edu/doe/eias/home0050.htm](http://www.firm.edu/doe/eias/home0050.htm)). Districts are encouraged to review this dissemination of records to make corrections for any students who are reported as dropouts but who are actually enrolled in other districts or programs. Follow-up of individual students by Highlands County ESE staff revealed that some students reported as dropouts in fact have graduated or are currently enrolled in this or other districts, but that this information is not reflected in the district database. A data quality review is needed to ensure that data reported by the district is accurate.

In addition, the dropout code for students withdrawn as a result of court action (W13) is the second most commonly used code in Highlands County, despite the fact that technical assistance provided by the DOE on the use of withdrawal codes specifically states that “Code W13 should seldom be used, and follow-up should be provided for any student coded W13. These students are assigned to a Department of Juvenile Justice or Department of Children and Families facility and are, therefore, participating in an education program. Students should be coded W02 (any PK-12 student promoted, retained, or transferred to another school in the same district) or W03 (any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend another public school in- or out-of-state), as appropriate.” This re-coding to W02 or W03 is not routinely done as part of data management in Highlands County.

During the interview process, staff reported concern that the extensive dropout retrieval activities conducted in the district may have a negative effect on the dropout rate in Highlands County, since some students experience two, three, or even more cycles of dropping out, and then returning to school. Data correction activities conducted appropriately within a given school year would ensure that a given student’s multiple dropouts would not be counted in the dropout calculation more than once. However, if the student is coded as a dropout at the time of the end of year survey 5 for multiple years, that student would serve to inflate the district’s rate over time, and could not be corrected.

The primary component of the student attendance policy in Highlands County Public Schools is the student attendance review committee (SARC), which is convened for students referred for multiple absences. Across the district, the majority of respondents indicated that attendance policies and the SARC system are effective and designed to address the varying needs of individual students, and that attendance is not a significant problem. Despite this, some respondents stated that the policies are not implemented consistently across all schools, and there was confusion regarding the specific attendance procedures at individual schools. At Avon Park High School, for example, staff comments regarding student attendance and the effectiveness of school attendance policies were contradictory, with some teachers reporting significant problems with attendance. These comments are supported by data reported by the DOE in the Florida School Indicators Report (available on the web at <http://info.doe.state.fl.us/fsir/>), which reveals that 18.9% of the students at Avon Park High School were absent for 21 or more days during the 2001-02 school year, compared with 8.3% at Lake Placid Senior High School and 8.7% at Sebring High School. The rates for Fred Wild Elementary School (8.0%), Lake Placid Middle School (14.0%) and Sebring Middle School (12.9%) also are higher than the state averages for the 2001-02 school year (elementary, 6.0%; middle school, 11.4%; high school, 15.1%).

Highlands County Public Schools provides an alternative education program (Alpha program) for at-risk students at Sun-in-Lake Elementary and Woodlawn Elementary, as well as the alternative program at the Academy at Youth Care Lane for secondary students who have disciplinary and behavioral problems. These are reported by district and school level staff to be effective programs that have had a positive impact on student performance and attendance. However, several respondents indicated that students who are successful in these programs do not receive the amount of support or transition assistance they need as they move on to middle school, or as they transition back to their home school.

In summary, Highlands County should be commended for their extensive dropout retrieval activities, which include instructional and placement alternatives. Attendance policies and procedures are generally effective, but are not fully understood by all staff or consistently implemented across the district. There are relatively high rates of students being absent for 21 or more days in a school year at Fred Wild Elementary School, Lake Placid Middle School, Sebring Middle School, and Avon Park High School. While there are effective alternative education initiatives in place at individual schools, there is a need for transition assistance or continued support as students in the alternative programs move to middle school or return to their home school. Finally, a data quality review is needed to ensure that data reported by the district is accurate.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

This category refers both to the specific curriculum used (content and/or specific publisher and program) and to the effectiveness or quality of instruction. With few exceptions, the quality and content of academic instruction across the district was very good. The district uses the Literacy First program for training teachers in explicit instruction, and all teachers have received inservice in it. Staff across the district reported that valuable instructional skills are developed through this program, and those skills can be applied to many areas of instruction. The following specific curricula or programs were reported by teachers and administrators to be effective: Read 180; SRA Corrective Reading; Failure-free Reading; performance-based GED preparation; Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) lab; and, Second Step (affective and social skills curriculum). Teachers and school administrators reported that the district provides ample support for instruction in the form of both materials and training.

One area of concern that was consistently mentioned by respondents was vocational education. Teachers and administrators in all of the middle schools and high schools visited reported that the existing vocational programs are adequate, but that more programs are needed, with more focus on hands-on experience and less emphasis on computer modules as a training tool. Students in the focus groups reported that their school provides several vocational education courses, including business technology, cooking, woodshop, and agriculture. They also reported that additional courses in auto mechanics, nursing, agriculture, cooking, welding, and cosmetology are available through South Florida Community College (SFCC). It was reported that the requirements for participation in general education vocational programs, especially those provided in collaboration with SFCC, limit access to vocational courses for some students with disabilities. Many of these students don't have the basic skills in reading or math to be successful in these courses.

The district provides transportation for students attending vocational or other dual-enrollment classes at SFCC, and this was seen by the monitors as a significant strength. In addition to the vocational courses offered in the district, there is a work placement program in place in all three high schools that is designed to address the employability skills and vocational needs of students on special diploma track as well as those students on standard diploma track who are considered at-risk for not earning the required credits or passing the FCAT. This program has resulted in job placements for a significant number of students.

The monitors observed instruction in 22 classrooms (12 ESE and 10 general education) across the six schools visited. Teaching activities in all classrooms observed were found to be consistently or generally planned and implemented in ways that promote student learning and ensure access to the appropriate (general or modified) curriculum. The parents who attended the focus group reported that there are few academic supports available to assist ESE students in learning critical concepts. However, the students in the special diploma track focus group reported that they feel they are learning new material, and that the teachers break down information so that they can learn it, and students in the standard diploma group reported that neither their general education nor their ESE courses were too difficult. Students in both groups felt that they are treated “like everyone else” in their general education courses.

In summary, instruction was consistently judged to be appropriate in the classrooms observed, and teachers reported that they receive ample support in the way of resources and training. The use of the Literacy First program is reported by staff to have a positive effect on instruction across subject areas, and the Second Step curriculum in place in several schools is effective in helping at-risk students develop affective communication and social skills. The one concern the monitors noted in the area of curriculum and instruction involves vocational training options. While vocational training programs are available, and the job placement program for students with disabilities at the high school is reported as very effective, there continues to be a need for increased access to meaningful vocational programs for students with disabilities.

### **Discipline and Classroom Management**

This category refers to classroom behavior management in general as well as to school or district policies related to discipline. Interviews with district-level administrators and staff revealed that disciplinary and behavioral problems are a significant issue in the district. In-school-suspension (ISS) rates in Highlands County are significantly higher than the state or enrollment group average. For the 2001-02 school year the ISS rate for students with disabilities was 31% for the district, compared to 15% for the enrollment group and 13% for the state (see appendix B). In response to this, the district is involved in a variety of initiatives to address behavior. They use the positive behavioral supports (PBS) program, and administrators and some staff have been trained in crisis prevention intervention (CPI). There is a formal process in place to conduct functional behavior assessments (FBAs) and to develop behavior intervention plans (BIPs).

Overall, teachers reported having few behavioral problems in their classes. It should be noted that, during the course of the 22 classroom visits conducted during this monitoring visit, all teachers were observed to consistently or generally implement effective behavior management strategies. This is somewhat in conflict with the discipline data reported by the district and

described above. School administrators described a clear set of procedures to be followed prior to an office referral. A review of the referral records of a sampling of students in one school revealed that many referrals are for incidents of dress code violations and other violations that do not substantially disrupt the classroom. For example, one record indicated that a student had skipped school on three separate occasions, and received ISS for three days for each of the violations. This resulted in the student being away from his regularly scheduled instruction for a period of 12 days. While students in ISS are provided an opportunity to complete required class work, for students at-risk of dropping out this isolation from the classroom may be detrimental. In addition, a review of the discipline records at the high schools revealed that the relatively high rate of ISS for students with disabilities may be influenced by a large number of referrals by a few specific teachers, and that a significant proportion of referrals are for relatively small number of individual students.

In summary, although the monitoring team noted effective classroom management in all classes observed, interviews with administrative staff and reviews of school-level data on student referrals and suspensions indicates that disciplinary policy and procedures are an area of concern that may be affecting the dropout rate. An analysis of school- and student-level data related to types of infractions and consequences reported, and the specific students or staff members involved, would be useful to the district in the development of a strategy to address the high discipline rates across the district.

### **Staff Development**

This category refers to any staff development activities that directly target interventions to prevent students with disabilities from dropping out. Interviews with district- and school-level administrators and staff revealed extensive staff development opportunities are available in Highlands County, although none directly state dropout prevention as the purpose. Reading is a particularly important topic currently (Read 180; DIBELS; Literacy First), as well as training related to inclusion (Quality Design for Instruction (QDI); Florida Uniting Students in Education (FUSE)). Training in positive behavioral supports and crisis intervention are routinely provided to interested staff. It was generally expressed that school staff have ample exposure to training related to curriculum, instruction, and behavior management, and that, as a result, lack of expertise in these areas does not contribute to the dropout rate. As noted in the preceding sections, it appears that staff knowledge and training in the area of curriculum and instruction is sufficient. However, a review of district data related to discipline indicates that behavior management and disciplinary policy are areas in which additional or alternative training may be necessary.

### **Parental Involvement**

This category refers to parent involvement as it relates directly to the likelihood that a student with a disability will drop out of school. In addition to IEP meetings, district and school staff reported a variety of opportunities exist for parent involvement, and that meetings are scheduled to encourage parent participation. Transportation is often provided for families who could not otherwise attend. Teachers across the district described a variety of strategies they use to encourage parent involvement, including reminders about IEP team meetings, phone calls home, parent nights that focus on specific topics (e.g., articulation/transition), home visits, and special activities such as a classroom Thanksgiving dinner.

Despite these efforts, it was reported that parent participation continues to be a concern, especially with regard to those students most at-risk of dropping out. While the seven parents who attended the focus group reported that they have not been given information regarding the ESE services available to their children, the majority of parents who responded to the parent survey responded positively about the schools' efforts to involve parents. Specifically, of the 231 parents of students with disabilities who responded, 76% reported that their child's school "sends me information about activities and workshops for parents," and 86% reported that their child's school "encourages me to participate in my child's education." For parents of gifted students, the results were similar, with 85% and 82% positive responses, respectively, to these items. It should be noted that lack of parental involvement in general, and lack of parental support for the value of remaining in school to earn a diploma in particular, were cited repeatedly by district- and school- level staff as primary contributors to the problem of students dropping out. This impression was contradicted by comments made by students in both of the student focus groups, many of whom reported that they had considered dropping out, but had been convinced to stay in school by their families.

In summary, while the district provides a substantial number and range of activities designed to encourage parental involvement in their children's education, including providing transportation and conducting home visits, parental participation is seen by staff as an area of concern.

### **Stakeholder Opinions Related to the Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities**

This category refers to respondents' views on issues directly related to the dropout rate for students with disabilities. When asked their opinion on the likely contributors to dropout rate for students with disabilities in Highlands County, the following issues were cited most frequently:

- inaccurate data reporting that misrepresents the numbers of students who have actually dropped out
- attendance policies that allow students to miss a significant amount of school; as a result, the students fall farther behind, and a sense of not belonging in school is fostered
- lack of meaningful vocational training opportunities, especially for students who are not academically able to succeed in classes at the community college
- students are not motivated to remain in school and to pursue a diploma
- the level of poverty and the rural nature of the community do not support students staying in school

### **Services to Gifted Students**

Gifted students in Highlands County are served in a range of placements. At the elementary level, some students receive services in their home school, while others are transported to a nearby school for the gifted class. At the middle school a gifted elective course is offered that is primarily computer-based. At the high school there is a gifted research elective course, but not many students choose to enroll in it. High school students can also enroll in advanced classes, or attend SFCC through dual enrollment. In addition, students are served through consultation with the gifted teacher at both the middle and high schools. At the high school level, the consultation consists of monthly meeting and participation in special projects, presentations, and field trips. Students in the gifted program have the same access to guidance services as do students in the general population, although additional information on college planning is provided through the

consultative process. The district is currently developing a scope and sequence for the gifted curriculum, which will address all grade levels. Of the 111 parents of gifted students that responded to the parent survey, 61% indicated that they were satisfied with the gifted services their children receive. In addition, 85% report that their children are academically challenged in their gifted classes, with 65% reporting that their children are academically challenged in their general education classes.

It was reported that the identification procedures in place in the district include parent and/or teacher recommendation, the use of a gifted characteristics checklist, and the use of a screening instrument. When the result of the screening indicates that a student may qualify, a formal evaluation is conducted. It was reported that the faculty in all schools have received training on the screening and referral procedures for the gifted program. Seventy-six percent of the respondents to the survey reported that they were satisfied with how quickly services were implemented following the initial request for an evaluation. It was reported that students are dismissed from the program only rarely, and that would be at parent request. At the least, students who no longer participate in the formal course offerings are served on a consultative basis.

Gifted teachers across the district praised Ms. Tzovarras and the district staff for their strong support of the program. The teachers reported that district staff are always there to answer questions and provide guidance, and that the teachers are given ample resources and training to implement their programs. The majority of parents (84%) reported that they are satisfied with their child's gifted teacher's expertise in teaching gifted students.

Highlands County is currently addressing disproportionate under-representation of minority students in its continuous improvement monitoring plan for gifted students. The racial/ethnic distribution in the general school population is: White—58%; Black—20%; Hispanic—19%. The distribution in the gifted program is: White—75%; Black—9%; Hispanic—11%.

### **Student Record Reviews**

A total of 26 student records, randomly selected from the population of exceptional students in Highlands County, were reviewed for compliance. The records were sent to the DOE for review by Bureau staff prior to the on-site visit. The review included: 20 IEPs for students with disabilities, excluding students eligible as "speech only"; 2 IEPs for students eligible as speech impaired; 2 IEPs for students eligible for low-incidence disabilities; and, 2 EPs for students identified as gifted. The sample group included records of 12 elementary students, 8 middle school students, and 6 high school students.

Of the 24 IEPs reviewed, 11 required reconvening of the IEP team because of a lack of a majority of measurable annual goals. There were no findings of noncompliance that required a funding adjustment. Systemic findings are those that occur at a sufficient enough frequency that the monitoring team could reasonably infer a system-wide problem. The following areas of noncompliance appear to be systemic in nature:

- no indication of which IEP team member served as the interpreter of instructional implications (7 records)

- lack of measurable annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks (20 records with at least one annual goal not measurable)
- inadequate present level of education performance statement (9 records)
- lack of correspondence between the annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks and the needs identified on the present level of performance statement (12 records)

In addition, the following represent items of individual or non-systemic findings:

- missing parent participation form documenting notice of the meeting
- notice of the meeting did not include a list of participants
- agency representative not invited to the IEP meeting of students who are active clients of the agency
- lack of a statement indicating how the student's disability affects the students involvement and progress in the general curriculum
- inadequate short term objectives or benchmarks
- special education services not clearly specified
- lack of an explanation of the extent to which the student will not participate with nondisabled peers
- participation in statewide assessment not addressed for a high school student
- "when available" used to describe frequency of services
- the present level of performance statement and the annual goals and short-term objectives and benchmarks do not support the services on the IEP
- lack of adequate information in reporting progress toward the annual goal
- lack of documentation that the concerns of the parent were considered in the development of the IEP
- lack of documentation that the most recent evaluation or state-wide assessment were taken into account

Two EPs for gifted students were reviewed for compliance. Both plans included an implementation date, but the development dates were left blank, and none of the outcomes included an evaluation.

Additional information regarding these findings, including identification of the specific student records that required reconvening of the IEP or EP teams, has been provided to the district under separate cover.

In summary, 11 IEPs were required to be reconvened; there were no funding adjustments. Systemic findings of noncompliance on IEPs were noted in four areas, and individual findings were noted in 13 additional areas.

### **District Forms Review**

Forms representing the thirteen areas identified below were submitted to Bureau staff for a review to determine compliance with federal and state laws. Findings were noted in nine of the areas on the current forms, with changes required on seven of the forms, and recommended on two others.

The following reflects the review of forms currently in use:

- *Parent Notification of Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting~*
- *IEP forms\**
- *Notice and Consent for Initial Placement\**
- *Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation*
- *Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation*
- *Notification of Change of Placement\**
- *Notification of Change of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)\**
- *Informed Notice of Refusal*
- *Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination~*
- *Informed Notice of Dismissal\**
- *Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement\**
- *Summary of Procedural Safeguards*
- *Annual Notice of Confidentiality\**

\* indicates findings that require immediate attention

~ indicates findings that recommend changes upon the next printing

In addition to a review of the forms currently in use in Highlands County, the district requested that the Bureau review forms proposed for use in the future. Findings were noted in three of the proposed forms, with changes required on two of the forms, and recommended on one other. The following reflects the review of proposed forms:

- *Parent Notification of Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting*
- *IEP forms+*
- *Notice and Consent for Initial Placement=*
- *Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation*
- *Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation*
- *Notification of Change of Placement+*
- *Notification of Change of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)*
- *Informed Notice of Refusal*
- *Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination*
- *Informed Notice of Dismissal*
- *Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement*
- *Summary of Procedural Safeguards*
- *Annual Notice of Confidentiality*

+ indicates findings of noncompliance

= indicates recommended changes

The district was notified of the specific findings via a separate letter dated June 3, 2003. A detailed explanation of the specific findings may be found in appendix E.



## **District Response**

In response to these findings, the district is required to develop a system improvement plan for submission to the Bureau. This plan must include activities and strategies intended to address specific findings, as well as measurable evidence of change. In developing the system improvement plan, every effort should be made to link the system improvement activities resulting from this focused monitoring report to the district's continuous improvement monitoring plan. Following is the format for the system improvement plan, including a listing of the critical issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement.

During the course of conducting the focused monitoring activities, including daily debriefings with the monitoring team and district staff, it is often the case that suggestions and/or recommendations related to interventions or strategies are proposed. Listings of these recommendations as well as specific discretionary projects and DOE contacts available to provide technical assistance to the district in the development and implementation of the plan are included following the plan format.



## Highlands County School District Focused Monitoring System Improvement Plan

This section includes the issues identified by the Bureau as most significantly in need of improvement. The district is required to provide system improvement strategies to address identified findings, which may include an explanation of specific activities the district has committed to implementing, or it may consist of a broader statement describing planned strategies. For each issue, the plan also must define the measurable evidence of whether or not the desired outcome has been achieved. Target dates that extend for more than one year should include benchmarks in order to track interim progress. Findings identified as “ESE” are those findings that reflect issues specific to ESE students. Findings identified as “All” are those findings that reflect issues related to the student population as a whole, including ESE students.

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<b>Category</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>ESE</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>System Improvement Strategy</b>	<b>Evidence of Change and Target Date</b>
Administration and Policy	A data quality review is needed to ensure that data reported by the district is accurate.		X		
	Follow-up information related to the status of students who have been reported as dropouts is not consistently reflected in the district database.		X		
	Attendance policies and procedures are generally effective, but are not fully understood by all staff or consistently implemented across the district.		X		

<b>Category</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>ESE</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>System Improvement Strategy</b>	<b>Evidence of Change and Target Date</b>
	There are relatively high rates of students being absent for 21 or more days in a school year at Fred Wild Elementary School, Lake Placid Middle School, Sebring Middle School, and Avon Park High School.		X		
	While there are effective alternative education initiatives in place at individual schools, there is a need for transition assistance or continued support as students in the alternative programs move to middle school or return to their home school.		X		
Curriculum and Instruction	Access to vocational programs is limited for some students with disabilities who read below grade level, and there is a reliance on computer-based instructional modules that may not be effective for students with disabilities.	X			
Discipline and Classroom Management	An analysis of school- and student-level data related to types of infractions and consequences reported, and the		X		

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
	specific students or staff members involved, is needed to develop a strategy to address the high discipline rates across the district.				
Staff Development	There is a comprehensive system of staff development in place; the district must ensure that staff participate in appropriate training opportunities, in particular those related to behavior and discipline.		X		
Parental Involvement	No significant findings.				
Gifted Services	No significant findings.				
Records Reviews	Eleven IEPs must be reconvened due to a lack of a majority of measurable annual goals.	X			
	Two EPs were missing required components.	X			
	Findings of noncompliance on IEPs primarily were related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>which IEP team member served as the interpreter of instructional implications</li> </ul>	X			

Category	Findings	ESE	All	System Improvement Strategy	Evidence of Change and Target Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of measurable annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks</li> <li>• inadequate present level of education performance statement</li> <li>• lack of correspondence between the annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks and the needs identified on the present level of performance statement</li> </ul>				
Forms Reviews	<p>Forms used to document the following activities must be revised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Notification of Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting</li> <li>• IEP forms</li> <li>• Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</li> <li>• Notification of Change of Placement</li> <li>• Notification of Change of FAPE</li> <li>• Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination</li> <li>• Informed Notice of Dismissal</li> </ul>	X			

<b>Category</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>ESE</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>System Improvement Strategy</b>	<b>Evidence of Change and Target Date</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice: Not Eligible for Exceptional Student Placement</li> <li>• Annual Notice of Confidentiality</li> </ul>				





## **Recommendations and Technical Assistance**

As a result of the focused monitoring activities conducted in Highlands County during the week of April 28, 2003, the Bureau has identified specific findings related to dropout rate for students with disabilities in the district. The following are recommendations for the district to consider when developing the system improvement plan and determining strategies that are most likely to effect change. The list is not all-inclusive, and is intended only as a starting point for discussion among the parties responsible for the development of the plan. A partial listing of technical assistance resources is also provided. These resources may be of assistance in the development and/or implementation of the system improvement plan.

### **Recommendations**

- Continue the dropout retrieval activities currently being implemented in the district.
- Request a Data Quality Review from Education Information and Accountability Services at the DOE to ensure that withdrawals are coded and edited appropriately; including the semi-annual dropout match activities.
- Consider the identified target population when collecting data and implementing strategies.
- Conduct school-level analyses of discipline data to address questions such as:
  - ✓ Which students have the highest referral rates, and for what types of infractions?
  - ✓ Do some staff members have significantly higher or lower referral rates than others, and what might be the cause?
  - ✓ Are some interventions or consequences more effective than others in changing student behavior?
  - ✓ Are there policies in place for some infractions that have unintended consequences (e.g., If a student receives two days of OSS for skipping school for one day, the result is actually three days of missed instruction).
  - ✓ Do instructional practices in the in-school suspension (ISS) setting promote student learning, especially for students with disabilities, or are they primarily designed for independent task completion and skill maintenance?
- Continue to supply curricular and technical assistance support to schools and staff as is currently being done.

### **Technical Assistance**

#### **Florida Inclusion Network**

Website: <http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com/>

The project provides learning opportunities, consultation, information and support to educators, families, and community members, resulting in the inclusion of all students. They provide technical assistance on literacy strategies, curriculum adaptations, suggestions for resource allocations and expanding models of service delivery, positive behavioral supports, ideas on differentiating instruction, and suggestions for building and maintaining effective school teams.

**Florida’s Positive Behavioral Supports Project**

(813) 974-6440

Fax: (813) 974-6115

<http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/flpbs/>

This project is designed to support teachers, administrators, related services personnel, family members, and outside agency personnel in building district-wide capacity to address challenging behavior exhibited by students in regular and special education programs. It provides training and technical assistance for districts, schools, and individual teams in all levels of positive behavior support (individual, classroom and school-wide).

**Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services**

In addition to the special projects described above, Bureau staff are available for assistance on a variety of topics. Following is a partial list of contacts.

**Dropout Prevention and Academic Intervention**

Mary Jo Butler

Michael Lisle

(850) 245-0479

**Education Information and Accountability Services**

Lavan Dukes, Bureau Chief

(850) 245-0400

e-mail: <mailto:askeias@fldoe.org>

**Behavior/Discipline**

Lee Clark, EH/SED

(850) 245-0478

**SLD, IEPs**

Paul Gallaher

(850) 245-0478

**Compliance**

Eileen Amy

Iris Anderson

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**APPENDIX A:**  
**DEVELOPMENT OF THE MONITORING PROCESS**



## **Development of the Monitoring Process 1999-2003**

With guidance from a work group of parent, school and district representatives and members of the State Advisory Committee for Exceptional Students, substantial revisions to Bureau monitoring practices were initiated during the 1999-2000 school year. The shift to a focused monitoring approach began at the national level, with the monitoring of state departments of education by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The revisions reflect a change in the focus of the monitoring process from one that relies primarily on procedural compliance to one that focuses on improved outcomes for students with disabilities, as measured by key data indicators. As a result of the efforts of the monitoring stakeholders' workgroup, three types of monitoring processes were established as part of the Florida DOE's system of exceptional student education monitoring and oversight. Those monitoring activities were identified as focused monitoring, random monitoring, and continuous improvement monitoring.

Beginning in 1999, Bureau staff and the stakeholders' workgroup developed a system whereby districts would be selected for focused monitoring based on their performance on key data indicators related to student performance, and the monitoring activities would focus on determining the root cause of the district's performance on that indicator. The following key data indicators were recommended by the monitoring restructuring work group and were adopted for implementation by the Bureau. The identified indicators and the sources of the data used are

- percentage of students with disabilities participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their non-disabled peers) [Data source: Survey 9]
- dropout rate for students with disabilities [Data source: Survey 5]
- percentage of students with disabilities exiting with a standard diploma [Data source: Survey 5]
- participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities [Data sources: performance data from the assessment files and Survey 3 enrollment data]

While districts were selected for focused monitoring based on their performance on key data indicators, they were randomly selected for the more procedural/ compliance-oriented random monitoring process. All 67 districts participate in the continuous improvement monitoring process. The focused monitoring activities applied only to students with disabilities, while random monitoring and continuous improvement monitoring involved both students with disabilities and students identified as gifted.

The change to the monitoring process also resulted in an adjustment to what is considered a "monitoring year." Historically, compliance monitoring activities in the state have been conducted in a cycle, and over the course of a school year. While the collection and analysis of data and implementation of system improvement plans for the continuous improvement monitoring process continue to be based on the traditional school year (e.g. 2002-03), the quality assurance visits conducted by the Bureau are conducted over the course of a calendar year (e.g., January to December, 2003).

During the transition year of 1999-2000 districts were asked to conduct extensive self-evaluations. Beginning in the 2000-01 school year, the focused monitoring process was

instituted. Four districts were selected for focused monitoring during the 2001 pilot year: Jackson County– standard diploma rate; Lee County– dropout rate; Osceola County– participation in statewide assessment; and, Taylor County– regular class placement.

During the 2002 monitoring cycle, seven districts were chosen for focused monitoring visits based on their state rankings, and three districts were selected at random for the more procedural/compliance-oriented random monitoring. The districts and the indicators they were selected on are as follows: Polk and Gadsden Counties – dropout rate; Madison and Franklin Counties – participation in statewide assessment; and, Dade and Lafayette Counties – regular class placement. Bradford County was selected on the basis of standard diploma rate, but that visit was changed to a random monitoring visit when it was determined that data reporting errors had resulted in a significant misrepresentation of the district’s ranking. Charlotte, Glades, and Duval Counties also were selected for random monitoring.

The continuous improvement monitoring process began during the 2001-02 school year. At that time, school districts were asked to examine key data indicators for exceptional students and to self-select two indicators (one for students with disabilities and one for gifted students) to target for improvement. The key data indicators for students with disabilities identified by the Bureau as part of the continuous improvement process are as follows:

- participation in statewide assessments
- percentage of students exiting with a standard diploma
- dropout rate
- percentage of students participating in regular classes (i.e., spending at least 80% of the school day with their nondisabled peers)
- performance on statewide assessments
- retention rate
- discipline rates
- disproportionality of student membership, which may include
  - percentage of PK-12 students identified as educable mentally handicapped (EMH)
  - racial/ethnic disparity of students identified as EMH
  - students identified as EMH served in separate class settings
  - student membership for selected disabilities (specific learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, severely emotionally disturbed, and educable mentally handicapped)

The key data indicators for students identified as gifted are as follows:

- performance on statewide assessments
- dropout rate
- student membership by racial/ethnic category, free/reduced lunch status, and limited English proficiency (LEP) status
- other, at the discretion of the district

In the fall of 2001, districts were required to develop a plan to conduct an in-depth analysis during the 2001-02 school year of the selected data indicators for both populations, and to submit the plan to the Bureau for review and approval. While all districts were required to submit a plan

for data collection during the initial year of continuous improvement monitoring, on-site visits by the Bureau were not conducted to review these activities.

For the 2002-2003 school year, based on the results of the data collection and analysis conducted during the 2001-02 school year, districts were required to submit continuous improvement monitoring plans (CIMPs) designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and for gifted students.

In an effort to utilize resources most effectively, activities related to random monitoring and continuous improvement monitoring visits have been consolidated. Therefore, during 2003 the Bureau is conducting on-site visits to eight districts chosen for focused monitoring based on key data indicators, and to two districts chosen at random for a review of the continuous improvement monitoring activities undertaken by the district. In addition, the Bureau will conduct follow-up visits to the four districts that participated in the focused monitoring process during 2001. Compliance reviews of selected policies, procedures, and student records are incorporated in varying degrees into all of the monitoring visits.





**APPENDIX B:**  
**DISTRICT DATA**





**Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services  
2003 LEA Profile**

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District: <b>Highlands</b>	PK-12 Population: <b>11,428</b>
Enrollment Group: <b>7,000 to 20,000</b>	Percent Disabled: <b>18%</b>
	Percent Gifted: <b>4%</b>

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## Introduction

The LEA profile is intended to provide districts with a tool for use in planning for systemic improvement. The profile contains a series of data indicators that describe measures of educational benefit, educational environment, and prevalence for exceptional students. The data are presented for the district, districts of comparable size (enrollment group) and the state. Where appropriate and available, comparative data for general education students are included.

Data presented as indicators of **educational benefit** (*Section One*)

- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) participation and performance
- Standard diploma rate
- Dropout rate
- Retention rate

Data presented as indicators of **educational environment** (*Section Two*)

- Regular class / natural environment placement
- Separate class placement
- Discipline rates

Data presented as indicators of **prevalence** (*Section Three*)

- Student membership by race/ethnicity
- Gifted membership by free/reduced lunch and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) status
- Student membership in selected disabilities by race/ethnicity
- Selected disabilities as a percent of all disabilities and as a percent of total PK-12 population

Four of the indicators included in the profile, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) participation, graduation rate, dropout rate, and regular class placement, are also used in the selection of districts for focused monitoring. Indicators describing the prevalence and separate class placement of students identified as educable mentally handicapped (EMH) are included to correspond with provisions of the Bureau's partnership agreement with the Office for Civil Rights.

## Data Sources

The data contained in this profile were obtained from data submitted electronically by districts through the Department of Education Information Database in surveys 2, 9, 3 and 5 and from the assessment files. School year data are included for **1999-00** through **December 2002**.

## Section One: Educational Benefit

Educational benefit refers to the extent to which children benefit from their educational experience. Progression through and completion of school are dimensions of educational benefits as are post-school outcomes and indicators of consumer satisfaction. This section of the profile provides data on indicators of student performance and school completion.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) participation and performance data found in this section includes students who were reported in February (survey 3) **and** had a reported score on the multiple choice portion of the FCAT for the 1999-00, 2000-01, and 2001-02 administrations. (Scores are not reported in cases where the student identification number is missing, incorrect or where the student did not attempt to answer the test questions.) Students who had a reported FCAT score but were not reported in February (survey 3) are not included. Data for students with disabilities and students who are gifted includes only students with a primary exceptionality reported in February (survey 3). Students who had a reported FCAT score but did not have a primary exceptionality in February are not included in the disabled or gifted data. The statewide student match rate for students with disabilities and students identified as gifted in February (survey 3) and the FCAT files was between 98 and 99 percent across the reported grade levels.

### Participation Rate in Statewide Assessments:

The number of students with disabilities reported in February (survey 3) who had a reported FCAT score divided by the total number enrolled during February (survey 3) of the same year. The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **1999-00** through **2001-02**.

Grade 3 Participation FCAT Math			Highlands Enrollment Group State	Grade 3 Participation FCAT Reading		
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
*	92%	89%		*	92%	89%
*	87%	87%		*	86%	87%
*	85%	87%	*	85%	87%	

Grade 5 Participation FCAT Math			Highlands Enrollment Group State	Grade 4 Participation FCAT Reading		
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
89%	89%	88%		87%	91%	86%
84%	87%	87%		82%	86%	87%
84%	85%	88%	83%	85%	88%	

Grade 8 Participation FCAT Math			Highlands Enrollment Group State	Grade 8 Participation FCAT Reading		
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
83%	86%	85%		84%	84%	87%
80%	79%	81%		80%	79%	81%
76%	76%	80%	76%	76%	80%	

Grade 10 Participation FCAT Math			Highlands Enrollment Group State	Grade 10 Participation FCAT Reading		
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
55%	47%	55%		55%	46%	55%
64%	60%	64%		63%	60%	65%
58%	59%	62%	58%	59%	62%	

\* Not administered in 1999-00.

\*\* Reported number participating exceeds enrollment.

## Performance on Statewide Assessments: FCAT Reading

The following tables show the percent of students in the district scoring at Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 and above on the **2000-01** and **2001-02** FCAT for students with disabilities, all students, and gifted students. The bars in the graph display the percent of students in the district scoring at or above achievement level 3 for **2000-01** and **2001-02**.

	Grade 3 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	nr	71%	nr	11%	nr	19%
all students	nr	26%	nr	15%	nr	59%
gifted students	nr	5%	nr	0%	nr	95%

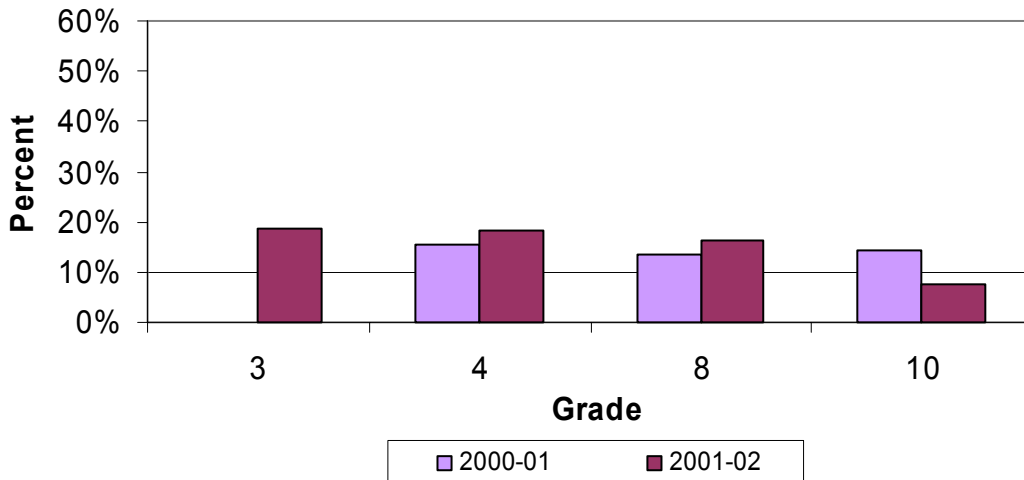
	Grade 4 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	71%	71%	13%	11%	16%	18%
all students	31%	31%	21%	18%	48%	51%
gifted students	0%	4%	4%	0%	96%	96%

	Grade 8 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	71%	73%	16%	11%	13%	16%
all students	30%	28%	30%	23%	39%	49%
gifted students	0%	0%	0%	4%	100%	96%

	Grade 10 Achievement Level					
	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities	65%	74%	20%	18%	14%	8%
all students	27%	32%	35%	35%	38%	33%
gifted students	0%	2%	19%	17%	81%	82%

nr = not reported

### Percent of Students with Disabilities at Achievement Level 3 or Higher FCAT Reading



# Performance on Statewide Assessments: FCAT Math

Grade 3 Achievement Level							
		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
		2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities		nr	57%	nr	19%	nr	25%
all students		nr	21%	nr	24%	nr	55%
gifted students		nr	0%	nr	0%	nr	100%

Grade 5 Achievement Level							
		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
		2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities		74%	63%	17%	25%	9%	12%
all students		34%	27%	27%	28%	39%	45%
gifted students		0%	4%	3%	0%	98%	96%

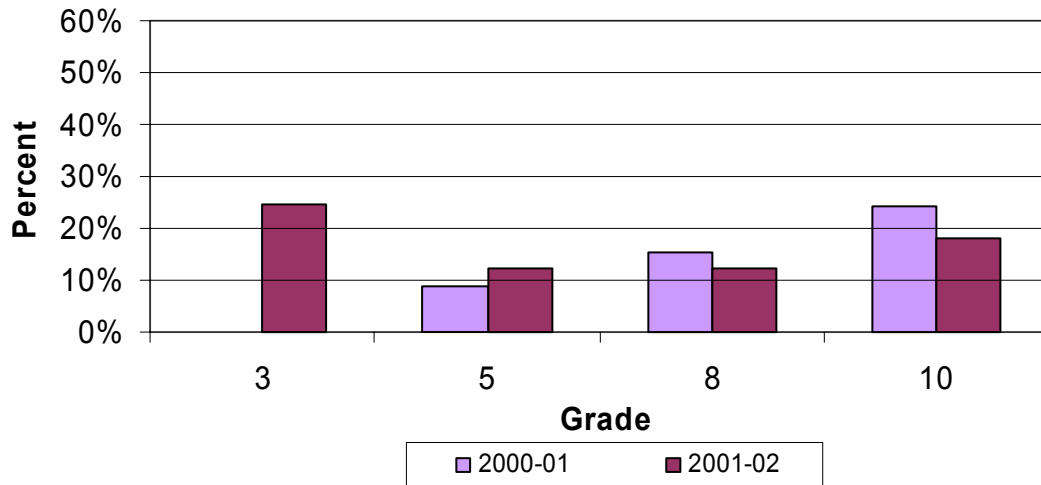
Grade 8 Achievement Level							
		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
		2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities		66%	67%	18%	21%	16%	12%
all students		26%	26%	20%	23%	55%	50%
gifted students		0%	0%	0%	4%	100%	96%

Grade 10 Achievement Level							
		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3+	
		2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02	2000-01	2001-02
students with disabilities		44%	45%	31%	37%	24%	18%
all students		14%	17%	20%	22%	65%	61%
gifted students		0%	0%	2%	0%	98%	100%

nr = not reported

## Percent of Students with Disabilities at Achievement Level 3 or Higher

### FCAT Math



## Standard Diploma Graduation Rate:

The number of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma (withdrawal code W06) divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education (withdrawal codes W06-10, W27) as reported in end of year survey 5. The resulting percentages are reported for the three-year period from **1999-00** through **2001-02**.

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Highlands	47%	40%	38%
Enrollment Group	57%	50%	52%
State	56%	51%	48%

## Retention Rate:

The number of students retained divided by the total year enrollment as reported in end of year survey 5. Total enrollment is the count of all students who attended school at any time during the school year. The results are reported for students with disabilities and all PK-12 students for **2001-02**.

		2001-02	
		Students with Disabilities	All Students
Highlands		8%	6%
Enrollment Group		5%	4%
State		7%	6%

## Dropout Rate:

The number of students grades 9-12 for whom a dropout withdrawal reason (DNE, W05, W11, W13-W23) was reported, divided by the total enrollment of grade 9-12 students and students who did not enter school as expected (DNEs) as reported in end of year survey 5. The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities, all PK-12 students, and gifted students for the years **1999-00** through **2001-02**.

		Students with Disabilities		
		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Highlands		11%	8%	8%
Enrollment Group		5%	5%	5%
State		6%	5%	5%

		All Students		
		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Highlands		6%	6%	4%
Enrollment Group		3%	3%	3%
State		5%	4%	3%

		Gifted Students		
		1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Highlands		<1%	<1%	<1%
Enrollment Group		<1%	<1%	<1%
State		<1%	<1%	<1%

## Section Two: Educational Environment

Educational environment refers to the extent to which students with disabilities receive special education and related services in natural environments, classes or schools with their nondisabled peers. This section of the profile provides data on indicators of educational environments.

### Regular Class Placement, Ages 6-21:

The number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 who spend 80 percent or more of their school week with nondisabled peers divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Highlands	43%	46%	46%
Enrollment Group	44%	45%	46%
State	48%	48%	48%

### Natural Environments, Ages 3-5:

The number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 who receive all of their special education and related services in educational programs designed primarily for children without disabilities or in their home divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Highlands	<1%	4%	2%
Enrollment Group	5%	5%	5%
State	6%	7%	7%

### Separate Class Placement of EMH Students, Ages 6-21:

The number of students ages 6-21 identified as educable mentally handicapped who spend less than 40 percent of their day with nondisabled peers divided by the total number of EMH students reported in December (survey 9). The resulting percentages are reported for three years from **2000-01** through **2002-03**.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Highlands	63%	76%	72%
Enrollment Group	56%	58%	60%
State	61%	62%	61%

### Discipline Rates:

The number of students who served in-school or out-of-school suspensions, were expelled, or moved to alternative placement at any time during the school year divided by the total year enrollment as reported in end of year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities and nondisabled students for **2001-02**.

		2001-02							
		In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions		Alternative Placement *	
		Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students	Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students	Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students	Students with Disabilities	Nondisabled Students
Highlands		31%	18%	17%	6%	0%	0%	<1%	<1%
Enrollment Group		15%	10%	14%	7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
State		13%	8%	15%	7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

\* Student went through expulsion process but was offered alternative placement.



## Section Three: Prevalence

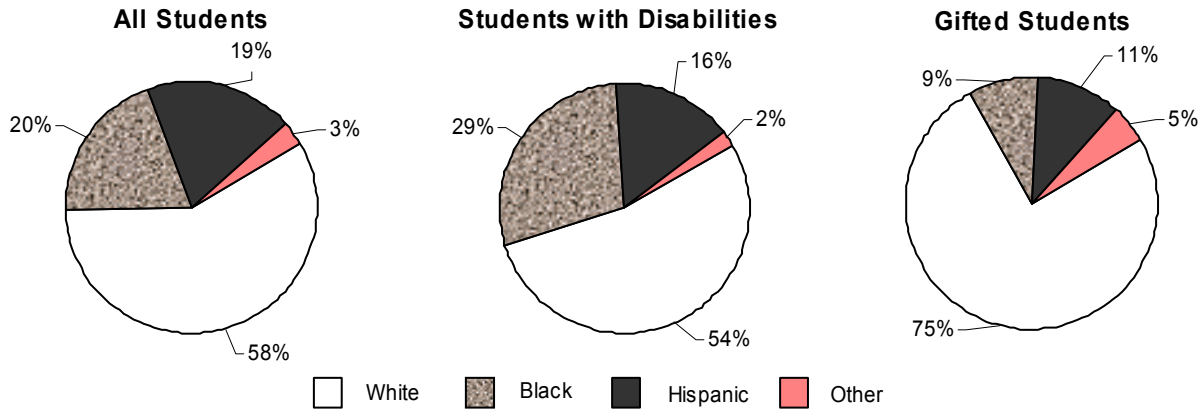
Prevalence refers to the proportion of the PK-12 population identified as exceptional at any given point in time. This section of the profile provides prevalence data by demographic characteristics.

### Student Membership by Racial/Ethnic Category:

The three columns on the left show the statewide racial/ethnic distribution for all PK-12 students, all students with disabilities, and all gifted students as reported in **October 2002** (survey 2). Statewide, there is a larger percentage of black students in the disabled population than in the total PK-12 population (28 percent vs. 24 percent) and a smaller percentage of black students in the gifted population (10 percent vs. 24 percent). Similar data for the district are reported in the three right hand columns and displayed in the graphs.

	State			District		
	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Gifted Students	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Gifted Students
White	51%	52%	64%	58%	54%	75%
Black	24%	28%	10%	20%	29%	9%
Hispanic	21%	17%	19%	19%	16%	11%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	<1%	4%	1%	<1%	3%
Am Ind/Alaskan Nat	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Multiracial	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%	<1%

### District Membership by Race/Ethnicity



### Free/Reduced Lunch and LEP:

The percent of all students and all gifted students in the district and the state on free/reduced lunch. The percent of all students and all gifted students in the district and in the state who are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). These percentages are based on data reported in **October 2002** (survey 2).

	State		District	
	All Students	Gifted Students	All Students	Gifted Students
Free / Reduced Lunch	44%	20%	57%	25%
LEP	12%	3%	7%	<1%

### Selected Disabilities by Racial/Ethnic Category:

Racial/ethnic data for all students as well as students with a primary disability of specific learning disabled (SLD), emotionally handicapped or severely emotionally disturbed (EH/SED), and educable mentally handicapped (EMH) are presented below. The data are presented for the state and the district as reported in **October 2002** (survey 2).

	All Students		SLD		EH/SED		EMH	
	State	District	State	District	State	District	State	District
White	51%	58%	54%	58%	48%	47%	33%	35%
Black	24%	20%	24%	25%	39%	44%	53%	42%
Hispanic	21%	19%	20%	15%	11%	8%	13%	22%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	<1%	0%
Am Ind/Alaskan Nat	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Multiracial	2%	1%	1%	<1%	2%	<1%	<1%	<1%

### Selected Disabilities as Percent of Disabled and PK-12 Populations:

The percentage of the total disabled population and the total population identified as SLD, EH or SED, EMH, and speech impaired (SI) for the district and for the state. Statewide, seven percent of the total population is identified as SLD and 46 percent of all students with disabilities are SLD. The data are presented for the district and state as reported in **October 2002** (survey 2).

	All Students		All Disabled	
	State	District	State	District
SLD	7%	9%	46%	50%
EH/SED	1%	3%	10%	15%
EMH	1%	2%	8%	11%
SI	2%	2%	14%	9%

### Districts in Highlands's Enrollment Group:

Charlotte, Citrus, Columbia, Flagler, Gadsden, Hendry, Hernando, Highlands, Indian River, Jackson, Martin, Monroe, Nassau, Okeechobee, Putnam



The New Department of  
**Education**

Jim Horne, Commissioner

**Highlands County School District  
 Focused Monitoring Visit  
 April 28-May 1, 2003**

**Districts Rank-Ordered on Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities**

#	District	Dropout Rate	Rank
34	Lafayette	12.8	1
22	Glades	12.1	2
2	Baker	8.8	3
36	Lee	8.8	4
28	Highlands	8.3	5
49	Osceola	7.8	6
45	Nassau	7.7	7
35	Lake	7.5	8
15	Dixie	7.4	9
26	Hendry	7.2	10
16	Duval	7.0	11
33	Jefferson	6.9	12
61	Suwannee	6.8	13
9	Citrus	6.6	14
52	Pinellas	6.4	15
66	Walton	6.3	16
62	Taylor	6.2	17
25	Hardee	6.1	18
38	Levy	6.1	19
20	Gadsden	6.0	20
44	Monroe	6.0	21
13	Miami Dade	5.9	22
40	Madison	5.7	23
54	Putnam	5.7	24
58	Sarasota	5.6	25
24	Hamilton	5.5	26
65	Wakulla	5.5	27
11	Collier	5.4	28
18	Flagler	5.4	29
30	Holmes	5.4	30
19	Franklin	5.1	31
67	Washington	5.1	32
42	Marion	5.0	33
4	Bradford	4.9	34

#	District	Dropout Rate	Rank
29	Hillsborough	4.9	35
51	Pasco	4.6	36
8	Charlotte	4.5	37
17	Escambia	4.2	38
32	Jackson	4.0	39
48	Orange	4.0	40
50	Palm Beach	4.0	41
53	Polk	4.0	42
27	Hernando	3.9	43
46	Okaloosa	3.9	44
14	DeSoto	3.8	45
21	Gilchrist	3.8	46
47	Okeechobee	3.7	47
55	St. Johns	3.7	48
60	Sumter	3.7	49
10	Clay	3.6	50
37	Leon	3.6	51
41	Manatee	3.3	52
31	Indian River	3.2	53
7	Calhoun	3.1	54
64	Volusia	3.0	55
56	St. Lucie	2.9	56
3	Bay	2.8	57
12	Columbia	2.6	58
23	Gulf	2.5	59
6	Broward	2.2	60
57	Santa Rosa	2.2	61
59	Seminole	2.1	62
5	Brevard	1.3	63
63	Union	1.3	64
43	Martin	1.2	65
1	Alachua	1.0	66
39	Liberty	0.0	67
	<b>District Total</b>	<b>4.6</b>	



**APPENDIX C:**  
**MONITORING TEAM MEMBERS**



**Highlands County School District  
Focused Monitoring Visit  
April 28-May 1, 2003**

**Monitoring Team Members**

**Department of Education Staff**

Shan Goff, Chief, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services  
Eileen Amy, Administrator, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Carol Kirkpatrick, Supervisor, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Iris Anderson, Program Specialist, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Gail Best, Program Specialist, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Lee Clark, Program Specialist, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Kim Komisar, Program Specialist, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance  
Paul Gallaher, Program Specialist, ESE Program Development and Services

**Peer Reviewers**

Patty Burrows, Pinellas County Public Schools  
Maureen Guarino, Bay County Public Schools

**Contracted Staff**

Batya Elbaum, Project Director, University of Miami  
Emily Joseph, University of Miami  
Adalis Sanchez, University of Miami  
Christopher Sarno, University of Miami  
Hope Nieman, Consultant





**APPENDIX D:**  
**SURVEY RESULTS**



**Highlands County School District  
2003 Parent Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of parents and families of exceptional education students in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a parent survey as part of the Bureau's district monitoring activities.

In conjunction with the 2003 Highlands County School District monitoring activities, the parent survey was sent to parents of 2,031 students with disabilities for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 231 parents (PK, n=17; K-5, n=94; 6-8, n=69; 9-12, n=51) representing 11% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 71 families were returned as undeliverable, representing 3% of the sample.

Parents responded "yes" or "no" to each survey item, indicating that they either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents who agreed with the item.

**% Yes**

**Overall, I am satisfied with:**

- the way I am treated by school personnel. 91
- the amount of time my child spends with regular education students. 85
- the level of knowledge and experience of school personnel. 78
- how quickly services are implemented following an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) decision 78
- the effect of exceptional student education on my child's self-esteem. 75
- the way special education teachers and regular education teachers work together. 75
- the exceptional education services my child receives. 73
- my child's academic progress. 67

**My child:**

- has friends at school. 91
- is aiming for a standard diploma. 85
- is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 82
- is usually happy at school. 77
- spends most of the school day involved in productive activities. 73

**At my child's IEP meetings, we have talked about:**

- which diploma my child may receive.\* 87
- the requirements for different diplomas.\* 80
- ways that my child could spend time with students in regular classes. 68
- whether my child should get accommodations (special testing conditions), for example, extra time. 66
- whether my child would take the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) 61
- whether my child needed services beyond the regular school year. 53

**My child's teachers:**

- are available to speak with me. 93
- expect my child to succeed. 89
- set appropriate goals for my child. 85
- give students with disabilities extra time or different assignments, if needed. 80
- call me or send me notes about my child. 73
- give homework that meets my child's needs. 68

**My child's school:**

- makes sure I understand my child's IEP. 88
- encourages me to participate in my child's education. 86
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 83
- addresses my child's individual needs. 80
- encourages acceptance of students with disabilities. 79
- offers students with disabilities the classes they need to graduate with a standard diploma. 79
- wants to hear my ideas. 76
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 76
- does all it can to keep students from dropping out of school. 75
- provides students with disabilities updated books and materials. 74
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 71
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's IEP. 70
- involves students with disabilities in clubs, sports, or other activities. 67
- provides information to students about education and jobs after high school.\* 67
- offers a variety of vocational courses, such as computers and business technology.\* 64

**% Yes**

**Parent Participation**

- I have attended one or more meetings about my child during this school year. 91
- I am comfortable talking about my child with school staff. 89
- I participate in school activities with my child. 71
- I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement. 26
- I have used parent support services in my area. 26
- I belong to an organization for parents of students with disabilities. 12
- I am a member of the PTA/PTO. 12

**Highlands County School District  
2003 Parent Survey Report  
Students Identified as Gifted**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of parents and families of exceptional education students in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a parent survey as part of the Bureau's district monitoring activities.

In conjunction with the 2003 Highlands County School District monitoring activities, the parent survey was sent to parents of 445 students identified as gifted for whom complete addresses were provided by the district. A total of 111 parents (K-5, n=34; 6-8, n=41; 9-12, n=36) representing 25% of the sample, returned the survey. Surveys from 8 families were returned as undeliverable, representing 2% of the sample.

Parents responded "yes" or "no" to each survey item, indicating that they either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents who agreed with the item.

<b>Overall, I am satisfied with:</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• my child's academic progress.</li> <li>• regular teachers' subject area knowledge</li> <li>• gifted teachers' expertise in teaching students identified as gifted.</li> <li>• gifted teachers' subject area knowledge.</li> <li>• the effect of gifted services on my child's self-esteem.</li> <li>• how quickly services were implemented following an initial request for evaluation.</li> <li>• regular teachers' expertise in teaching students identified as gifted.</li> <li>• the gifted services my child receives.</li> </ul>	<p>86</p> <p>85</p> <p>84</p> <p>82</p> <p>81</p> <p>76</p> <p>70</p> <p>67</p>

**In Regular Classes, my child:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has friends at school.</li> <li>• is learning skills that will be useful later on in life.</li> <li>• is usually happy at school.</li> <li>• has his/her social and emotional needs met at school.</li> <li>• has creative outlets at school.</li> <li>• is academically challenged at school.</li> </ul>	<p>99</p> <p>93</p> <p>91</p> <p>85</p> <p>70</p> <p>65</p>
--	---

**In Gifted Classes, my child:**

- is usually happy at school. 94
- has friends at school. 94
- is learning skills that will be useful later on in life. 92
- has his/her social and emotional needs met at school. 89
- has creative outlets at school. 86
- is academically challenged at school. 85

**My child's regular teachers:**

- expect appropriate behavior. 96
- are available to speak with me. 96
- provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups. 82
- give homework that meets my child's needs. 82
- have access to the latest information and technology. 81
- set appropriate goals for my child. 80
- relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits. 71
- call me or send me notes about my child. 53

**My child's gifted teachers:**

- expect appropriate behavior. 98
- are available to speak with me. 93
- set appropriate goals for my child. 89
- have access to the latest information and technology. 86
- provide coursework that includes representation of diverse ethnic, racial, and other groups. 82
- relate coursework to students' future educational and professional pursuits. 81
- give homework that meets my child's needs. 71
- call me or send me notes about my child. 55

**My child's home school:**

- treats me with respect. 95
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 85
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 85
- encourages me to participate in my child's education. 82
- wants to hear my ideas. 79
- makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP. 74
- involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP). 72

**% Yes**

**My child's home school (cont.):**

- addresses my child's individual needs. 68
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP. 60
- provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials. 60
- implements my ideas. 59
- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 59

**My child's 2nd school:**

- informs me about all of the services available to my child. 100
- sends me information written in a way I understand. 100
- treats me with respect. 91
- wants to hear my ideas. 89
- sends me information about activities and workshops for parents. 82
- encourages me to participate in my child's education. 80
- provides students identified as gifted with appropriate books and materials. 80
- addresses my child's individual needs. 73
- makes sure I understand my child's EP or IEP. 73
- involves me in developing my child's Educational Plan (EP or IEP). 70
- explains what I can do if I want to make changes to my child's EP or IEP. 55
- implements my ideas. 44

**Students identified as gifted: (primarily for high school students)**

- are provided with the opportunity to participate in externships or mentorships. 81
- have the option of taking a variety of vocational courses. 74
- are provided with information about options for education after high school. 74
- are provided with career counseling. 64

**Parent Participation**

- I participate in school activities with my child. 81
- I have attended one or more meetings about my child during this school year. 75
- I attend School Advisory Committee meetings concerning school improvement. 31
- I am a member of the PTA/PTO. 18
- I have used parent support services in my area. 13
- I belong to an organization for parents of students identified as gifted. 8



**Highlands County School District  
2003 Student Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities**

In order to obtain the perspective of students with disabilities who receive services from public school districts, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a student survey as part of the Bureau's focused monitoring activities.

In conjunction with the 2003 Highlands County School District monitoring activities, a sufficient number of surveys were provided to allow all students with disabilities, grades 9-12, to respond. Instructions for administration of the survey by classroom teachers, including a written script, were provided for each class or group of students. Since participation in this survey is not appropriate for some students whose disabilities might impair their understanding of the survey, professional judgment is to be used to determine appropriate participation.

A total of 209 surveys representing approximately 31% of students with disabilities in grades 9-12 in the district were returned. Data are from 3 (75%) of the district's 4 schools with students in grades 9-12.

<b>I am taking the following ESE classes:</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electives (physical education, art, music)</li> <li>• English</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Math</li> <li>• Social Studies</li> <li>• Vocational (woodshop, computers)</li> </ul>	<p>27</p> <p>23</p> <p>21</p> <p>19</p> <p>18</p> <p>10</p>
<b>At my school:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESE teachers give students extra help, if needed.</li> <li>• ESE teachers believe that ESE students can learn.</li> <li>• ESE teachers teach students in ways that help them learn.</li> <li>• ESE teachers give students extra time or different assignments, if needed.</li> <li>• ESE teachers teach students things that will be useful later on in life.</li> <li>• ESE teachers understand ESE students' needs.</li> <li>• ESE teachers provide ESE students with updated books and materials</li> </ul>	<p>88</p> <p>88</p> <p>85</p> <p>81</p> <p>79</p> <p>77</p> <p>60</p>

**I am taking the following regular/mainstream classes:**

- English 55
- Math 54
- Science 51
- Electives (physical education, art, music) 51
- Social Studies 45
- Vocational (woodshop, computers) 43

The following section was filled out by students who are taking any regular/mainstream classes.

**At my school:**

- Regular education teachers believe that ESE students can learn. 79
- Regular education teachers teach ESE students things that will be useful later on in life. 76
- Regular education teachers give ESE students extra help if needed. 66
- Regular education teachers understand ESE students' needs. 66
- Regular education teachers teach ESE students in ways that help them learn. 64
- Regular education teachers give ESE students extra time or different assignments if needed. 61

**At my school, ESE students:**

- get the help they need to well in school. 88
- are encouraged to stay in school. 85
- participate in clubs, sports, and other activities. 83
- fit in at school. 80
- can take vocational classes such as computers and business technology. 80
- get work experience (on-the-job training) if they are interested. 78
- get information about education after high school. 76
- spend enough time with regular education students. 76
- are treated fairly by teachers and staff. 72

**Diploma Option**

- I know the difference between a regular and a special diploma. 91
- I agree with the type of diploma I am going to receive. 86
- I know what courses I have to take to get my diploma. 79
- I had a say in the decision about which diploma I would get. 77
- I will probably graduate with a regular diploma. 72

## **IEP**

- I was invited to attend my IEP meeting this year. 79
- I attended my IEP meeting this year. 73
- I had a say in the decision about which classes I would take. 68
- I had a say in the decision about special testing conditions I might get for the FCAT or other tests. 43
- I had a say in the decision about whether I need to take the FCAT or a different test. 39

## **FCAT**

- Teachers help ESE students prepare for the FCAT. 68
- In my English/reading classes, we work on the kinds of skills that are tested on the reading part of the FCAT 68
- I took the FCAT this year. 66
- In my math classes, we work on the kinds of problems that are tested on the math part of the FCAT. 61
- I received accommodations (special testing conditions) for the FCAT. 51

**Highlands County School District  
2003 Teacher Survey Report  
Students with Disabilities**

Responding to the need to increase the involvement of the service providers of students with disabilities in evaluating the educational services provided to their children, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services contracted with the University of Miami to develop and administer a teacher survey in conjunction with the Bureau's district monitoring activities.

Surveys developed for teachers and other service providers were mailed to each school, with a memo explaining the key data indicator and the monitoring process. All teachers, both general education and ESE, were provided an opportunity to respond. Surveys were returned from 423 teachers (59% of all teachers in the district) from all fifteen of the schools in Highlands County.

Teachers responded "consistently," "to some extent," "minimally," or "not at all" to each survey item. The district response for each item was calculated as the percentage of respondents reported that it consistently occurs.

**% Consistently**

**To provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, my school:**

- places students with disabilities into general education classes whenever possible. 75
- ensures that students with disabilities feel comfortable when taking classes with general education students. 73
- modifies and adapts curriculum for students as needed. 70
- addresses each student's individual needs. 65
- ensures that the general education curriculum is taught in ESE classes to the maximum extent possible. 58
- encourages collaboration among ESE teachers, GE teachers and service providers. 52
- offers teachers professional development opportunities regarding curriculum and support for students with disabilities. 44
- provides adequate support to GE teachers who teach students with disabilities. 43

**To help students with disabilities who take the FCAT, my school:**

- provides teachers with FCAT test preparation materials. 88
- provides students with appropriate testing accommodations. 79
- aligns curriculum for students with the standards that are tested on the FCAT. 67
- gives students in ESE classes updated textbooks. 57

**% Consistently**

**To keep students with disabilities from dropping out, my school:**

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| • develops IEPs according to student needs.   | 87 |
| • makes an effort to involve parents in their child's education.                        | 78 |
| • conducts ongoing assessments of individual students' performance.                     | 77 |
| • allows students to make up credits lost due to disability-related absences.           | 74 |
| • ensures that classroom material is grade- and age-appropriate.                        | 68 |
| • encourages participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities. | 65 |
| • provides positive behavioral supports.  | 61 |
| • ensures that classroom material is culturally appropriate.                            | 60 |
| • ensures that students are taught strategies to manage their behavior as needed.       | 54 |
| • provides social skills training to students as needed..                               | 52 |
| • implements a dropout prevention program.  | 20 |

**The following items relate primarily to middle and high schools. Responses are provided by school level.**

**% Consistently  
MS HS**

**To encourage students with disabilities to stay in school, my school:**

- |  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| • implements an IEP transition plan for each student.*                     | 88 | 87 |
| • provides students with information about options after graduation.*      | 58 | 73 |
| • teaches transition skills for future employment and independent living.* | 10 | 63 |
| • coordinates on-the-job training with outside agencies.                   | 12 | 67 |
| • provides students with job training.*                                    | 14 | 50 |

**To ensure that as many students with disabilities as possible graduate with a standard diploma, my school:**

- |  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| • informs students through the IEP process of the different diploma options and their requirements.* | 74 | 87 |
| • provides extra help to students who need to retake the FCAT.*                                      | 66 | 81 |
| • encourages students to aim for a standard diploma when appropriate.*                               | 41 | 78 |



**APPENDIX E:**  
**FORMS REVIEW**





**Highlands County School District  
Focused Monitoring Report  
Forms Review**

This forms review was completed as a component of the focused monitoring visit conducted the week of April 28, 2003. The following district forms were compared to the requirements of applicable State Board of Education rules, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and applicable sections of Part 300, Code of Federal Regulations. The review includes required revisions and recommended revisions based on programmatic or procedural issues and concerns. The results of the review are detailed below and list the applicable sources used for the review. In addition to a review of the current forms in use in Highlands County, you have also requested that we review forms that you are proposing for use in the future. The review of those forms follows the review of your current forms.

<p><b>Parent Notification of Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting</b> <i>Form Parent Invitation To Exceptional Student Educational Meeting MIS 2.31</i> <b>Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.345</b></p>
--

The following comment is made regarding this form:

- This form states, “The people in attendance may include....” Parents are to be informed of who has been invited to the meeting. It is recommended that the statement be changed to read, “The following people have been invited to the meeting....”

<p><b>Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting</b> <i>Form Individual Educational Program/Transition Educational Plan MIS 02.24a-e</i> <b>Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.347</b></p>
---

**The following must be addressed:**

- This form does not include a statement of how the student’s progress toward the annual goals will be measured, nor does it inform the parents that they will receive notification of progress at least as often as parents of nondisabled students are informed of their student’s progress.

<p><b>Notice and Consent for Initial Placement</b> <i>Form Eligibility Determination and Staffing Form MIS 02.107</i> <b>Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505</b></p>
--

**The following must be addressed:**

- On this form, there is a mixture of places to report decisions that are made by a staffing committee and made by the IEP team. While this form does have the required notice components, the form only references evaluation information reviewed by the eligibility staffing committee in determining eligibility. The statement does not appear to include evaluation information related to the initial placement.

**Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation**  
**Form** *Consent for Formal Individual Evaluation MIS 02.43*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation**  
**Form** *Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation MIS 02.44*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Notice of Change in Placement**  
**Form** *Informed Notice of Staffing and Educational Placement MIS 02.108*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

**The following must be addressed:**

- On this form, there are numerous places to report decisions that are made by a staffing committee and made by the IEP team. While this form does have the required notice components, the form only has a place for other factors related to the change of placement in the section referencing the decision by the staffing committee. The statement does not appear to include other factors related to the IEP team’s decision regarding change of placement.

**Notice of Change in FAPE**  
**Form** *Informed Notice of Staffing and Educational Placement MIS 02.108*  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

**The following must be addressed:**

- This form lacks the required components that would describe the proposed action by the district, an explanation of why the district proposed the action, a description of each evaluation procedure considered, and a description of any options and other factors relevant to the district’s proposal.

**Notice of Ineligibility****Form** *Informed Notice of Staffing and Educational Placement MIS 02.108***Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505****The following must be addressed:**

- On this form, there is a mixture of places to report decisions that are made by a staffing committee and made by the IEP team. The form incorrectly includes ineligibility as a function of the IEP team, and includes some of the required components of notice of ineligibility in the section that details the IEP team's decision making process. This form will need to be revised to indicate that the determination of ineligibility is a function of the staffing committee and list the notice requirements of providing a description of the staffing committee's proposed action, and any options considered and the reasons why those options were rejected.

**Notice of Dismissal****Form** *Informed Notice of Staffing and Educational Placement MIS 02.108***Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505****The following must be addressed:**

- On this form, there is a mixture of places to report decisions that are made by a staffing committee and made by the IEP team. The form correctly includes dismissal as a function of the IEP team, but the required component of describing any other factors relevant to the district's proposal for dismissal are listed under the section describing the activities of the staffing committee.
- This form does not contain the required component of providing evidence that there was a reevaluation prior to the dismissal.

**Informed Notice of Refusal****Form** *Notice of Refusal to Take a Specific Action MIS 02.67***Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination****Form** *Informed Notice of Staffing and Educational Placement MIS 02.108***Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.534, 300.503**

The following comment is made regarding this form:

- On this form, there is a mixture of places to report decisions that are made by a staffing committee and made by the IEP committee. While this form does contain the required components, it is recommended that the form be revised to clearly separate the different functions of the staffing committee and the IEP team.

**Confidentiality of Information**

**Form:** *Student Records Notice of Privacy Rights of Students and Parents*

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Part 99 Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.503**

**The following must be addressed:**

- This form does not include the required component of explaining the procedures by which the parent or the eligible student can exercise his/her right to review the student’s educational records.
- While the notice states that the parent or eligible student has the right to “challenge” the contents that may be “incorrect or misleading,” it does not state that the parent or the eligible student has the right to seek amendment to the records, nor the procedures to request an amendment.
- This form does not include the required component of the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the district to comply with the requirements of FERPA.
- The form does not include the specification for determining who constitutes a school official and what constitutes a legitimate educational interest.
- The section that discusses the waivers of rights “to inspect and review confidential letters...” reads that, “All such waivers must be executed by the student regardless of age.” This statement is in violation of FERPA regulations.

**The following comment is made regarding this form:**

There is one section that states that parents must notify the school administrative office “within the first 30 days of the school year” of their objection to the release of “directory” information. It should be clarified that there is no time limit in regard to when during the year that the parent or eligible student may exercise his/her rights in regard to the FERPA requirements.

The Gifted Student Educational Placement form, MIS 02.114a-e, that documents the plan developed for students who have been determined eligible for the gifted program was reviewed and contains the required components.

It was noted that the district utilizes the procedural safeguards wording provided by the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services.

The district also submitted several forms proposed for the district’s future use and requested that the district review these forms for compliance. The following information is presented regarding these forms.

**Parent Notification of Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting**  
**Form *Meeting Participation Form ESE #11***  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.345**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting**  
**Form *Individual Educational Program/Transition Educational Plan. ESE #13 and ESE #35***  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.347**

**The following must be addressed:**

- This form does not include a statement of how the student's progress toward the annual goals will be measured, nor does it inform the parents that they will receive notification of progress at least as often as parents of nondisabled students are informed of their student's progress.

**Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation**  
**Form *Consent for Formal Individual Evaluation ESE #9***  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation**  
**Form *Informed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation ESE #19***  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**Notice and Consent for Initial Placement**  
**Form *Eligibility Determination and Staffing Form ESE #12***  
**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

The following comment is made regarding this form:

- This form provides information regarding both the staffing committee's determination of eligibility and the IEP team's determination for placement. The way the form has been developed implies that the options for placement that were considered, the evaluations reviewed, and the other factors considered, were considered by the staffing committee rather than the IEP team. It is recommended that the form be revised to clearly indicate the separate functions of the staffing committee and the IEP team.

**Notice of Change in Placement Form**

**Form** *ESE Exceptional Student Education IEP ESE #13*

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.503 and 300.505**

**The following must be addressed:**

- The information on the IEP lacks the required component of describing the action (change of placement) proposed or refused by the district.
- There is not an explanation of why the district has proposed the change of placement.
- The form lacks the requirement of providing a description of any other factors relevant to the district's proposal or refusal.

**Documentation of Staffing/Eligibility Determination**

**Form** *Eligibility Determination and Staffing Form ESE #12*

**Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulation Sections 300.534, 300.503**

This form contains the components for compliance.

**APPENDIX F:**  
**GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**





**Highlands County School District  
Focused Monitoring Visit  
April 28-May 1, 2003**

**Glossary of Acronyms**

BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
Bureau	Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services
CCC	Computer Curriculum Corporation
CPI	Crisis Prevention Intervention
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
DOE	Department of Education
EH	Emotionally Handicapped
EMH	Educable Mentally Handicapped
EP	Educational Plan (for gifted students)
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FUSE	Florida Uniting Students in Education
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act
IEP	Individual Educational Plan (for students with disabilities)
ISS	In-school Suspension
LEA	Local Educational Agency
MIS	Management Information System
OSS	Out-of-school Suspension
PBS	Positive Behavioral Supports
PreK (PK)	Pre-kindergarten
QDI	Quality Designs for Instruction
SARC	Student Attendance Review Committee
SED	Severely Emotionally Disturbed
SFCC	South Florida Community College
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
TMH	Trainable Mentally Handicapped