

**2014-15 Exceptional Student Education
Monitoring and Assistance
On-Site Visit Report**

**Miami-Dade County School District
September 29-October 2, 2014**



**Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), Division of Public Schools, Florida Department of Education, and is available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/mon-home.asp>. For information on available resources, contact the BEESS Resource and Information Center (BRIC).

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September 1, 2015

Mr. Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent
Miami-Dade County School District
1450 N.E. Second Avenue, Suite 912
Miami, Florida 33132

Dear Superintendent Carvalho:

We are pleased to provide you with the 2014-15 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Miami-Dade County School District. This report was developed by integrating multiple sources of information related to an on-site monitoring visit to your school district on September 29-October 2, 2014. Those information sources included interviews with district and school staff, student-focus groups, Local Educational Agency Profiles, Guiding Questions – District Level Needs Assessment and an action-planning and problem-solving process.

During the 2013-14 school year, the Miami-Dade County School District was selected for an on-site visit due to the rate of discipline of students with disabilities and the percentage of students with individual educational plans in the regular classroom. At the request of the school district, the dates of the on-site visit were changed from the week of April 14-18, 2014, to September 29-October 2, 2014. The on-site visit was conducted by a State Support Team (SST) that included bureau and discretionary project staff.

The 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those State Performance Plan indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for coordinated early intervening services and those indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities. Additionally, the process focuses on a shift from ESE compliance to outcomes to prepare all students for college and career readiness, which include: increasing standard diploma graduates; decreasing the number of students dropping out of school; increasing regular class placement; decreasing the need for seclusion and restraint and eliminating disproportionality in eligibility identification and discipline.

Ms. Ava Goldman, Administrative Director, Office of Academics and Transformation, Division of Academic Support, ESE and Student Support, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for the on-site visit and throughout the visit. In addition, the principals and other staff members at the schools visited welcomed the SST and demonstrated a commitment to the

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

Superintendent Carvalho
September 1, 2015
Page Two

education of students in the school district. This report will be posted on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/mon-home.asp>.

As part of the SST's visit, representatives from the school district's ESE department, the schools visited and other school district staff participated in an action-planning and problem-solving process. This group reviewed the school district's data collected prior to and during the on-site visit and determined the areas of need to address in the action plan. Based upon the areas of need, the action plan will be implemented by the ESE department with the assistance of designated discretionary project staff from the SST.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to students with disabilities in the Miami-Dade County School District. If there are any questions regarding this report, please contact me at 850-245-0475 or via email at monica.verra-tirado@fldoe.org.

Sincerely,

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

Enclosure

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Authority | 1 |
| Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance Process | 2 |
| Background Information | 2 |
| School Selection | 3 |
| On-Site Activities..... | 3 |
| Results | 7 |
| State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators 4A and 4B – Discipline | 8 |
| SPP Indicator 5, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)..... | 9 |
| Student Focus Groups | 11 |
| Administrator Interviews and Focus Groups | 13 |
| Commendations | 14 |
| Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps..... | 15 |
| Technical Assistance..... | 18 |
| State Support Team for Miami-Dade County School District..... | 19 |
| Appendix A..... | 20 |
| Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment | 20 |
| Appendix A: Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment..... | 21 |
| Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations..... | 22 |

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Miami-Dade County School District

September 29-October 2, 2014

Authority

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation, is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all ESE laws (sections 1001.03(3), 1003.571 and 1008.32, Florida Statutes [F.S.]) and rules. One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities (s. 300.1(d) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]). The bureau is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of IDEA and the educational requirements of the state are implemented (34 CFR §300.149(a)(1) and (2)).

In fulfilling this requirement, BEESS monitors ESE programs provided by district school boards in accordance with ss.1001.42, 1003.57 and 1003.573, F.S. Through these monitoring activities, the bureau examines records and ESE services, evaluates procedures, provides information and assistance to school districts and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. The monitoring system is designed to facilitate improved educational outcomes for students while ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

Under 34 CFR §300.646(b)(2), if a state identifies significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity in a Local Educational Agency (LEA) with respect to the identification of students as students with disabilities, the identification of students in specific disability categories, the placement of students with disabilities in particular educational settings or the taking of disciplinary actions, the LEA must use the maximum amount (15 percent) of funds allowable for comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) for students in the LEA, particularly, but not exclusively, for students in those groups that were significantly overidentified.

Section 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities, was created in July 2010, and established documentation, reporting and monitoring requirements for districts regarding the use of restraint and seclusion for students with disabilities. School districts were required to have policies and procedures that govern parent notification, incident reporting, data collection and monitoring of the use of restraint or seclusion for students with disabilities in place no later than January 31, 2011. In July 2011, s. 1003.573, F.S., was amended to require that the FDOE establish standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual or physical restraint and occurrences of seclusion. In September and October 2011, the standards established by the FDOE were provided to school districts and were included in the district's Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures (SP&P) document.

ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process

Background Information

The 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those SPP indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for CEIS and the following indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities:

- Indicator 1 – Graduation: Percentage of youth with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma.
- Indicator 2 – Dropout: Percentage of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.
- Indicator 4 – Rates of suspension and expulsion:
 - A. Percentage of school districts that have a significant discrepancy in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs.
 - B. Percentage of school districts that have (a) a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days for children with IEPs; and (b) policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and support, and procedural safeguards.
- Indicator 5 – Educational environments: Percentage of children with IEPs aged six through 21:
 - A. Inside the regular class 80 percent or more of the day;
 - B. Inside the regular class less than 40 percent of the day; and
 - C. In separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound and hospital placements.
- Indicator 10 – Disproportionality, specific disability categories: Percentage of school districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.
- CEIS – Services provided to students in kindergarten through Grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through Grade 3) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment.
- Restraint – Rate of incidents of restraint, as reported on the FDOE website.
- Seclusion – Rate of incidents of seclusion, as reported on the FDOE website.

The ESE Monitoring and Assistance process includes four phases:

- Phase 1 was composed of planning activities that occur in advance of the first on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 was the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the State Support Team (SST).
- Phase 3 includes follow-up and post-initial visit activities that are conducted by a designated follow-up team, as determined by the SST, and identification of the ongoing data that will be collected.
- Phase 4 includes evaluation of the effectiveness of the school district's action plan, and should include participation of the comprehensive team that was involved in Phase 1.

In a letter dated August 27, 2013, the superintendent of the Miami-Dade County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: discipline and least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. During the pre-

visit meetings with the SST, consultation with the school district staff, and the review of the data submitted by the school district, it was determined that the secondary focus areas would include an on-site visit to a Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facility and selected elementary schools as identified by FDOE on the lowest 300 performing schools in Florida report.

School Selection

Upon review of the school district's data, it was determined that the monitoring and assistance process would include the following schools for school-level administrators' interviews and focus groups involving multiple schools and student focus groups:

- Agenoria S. Paschal/Olinda Elementary School
- Allapattah Middle School
- AMI Kids Dade Marine South (DJJ facility)
- Booker T. Washington Senior High School
- Felix Varela Senior High School
- Frederick R. Douglass Elementary School
- G. Holmes Braddock Senior High School
- Gulfstream Elementary School
- Jose De Diego Middle School
- Kelsey L. Pharr Elementary School
- Miami Jackson Senior High School
- Miami Southridge Senior High School
- Paul Laurence Dunbar K-8 Center
- Phillis Wheatley Elementary School
- Pine Lake Elementary School
- Richmond Heights Middle School

On-Site Activities

SST – On-Site Visit Team

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

FDOE, BEESS

- Monica Verra-Tirado, Chief, Co-Facilitator, BEESS
- Annette Oliver, Educational Program Specialist, Co-Facilitator, Program Accountability Assessment and Data Systems
- Misty Bradley, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
- Karin Gerold, Program Specialist, DRM
- Leanne Grillot, Program Specialist, Instructional Support Services
- Curtis Jenkins, School Counseling Consultant, Student Support Services

FDOE/Bureau Discretionary Projects

- Lisa Friedman-Chavez, Regional Transition Representative, Region 5, Project 10: Transition Education Network (Project 10)
- Carmelina Hollingsworth, Coordinator of District Outreach Programs, Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RMTC:DHH)
- Kelly Justice, Regional Coordinator, Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Project
- Barbara Krakower, Facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
- Gwen Lipscomb, Coordinator, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
- Stephanie Martinez, Technical Assistance Specialist, Florida's Positive Behavior Support (PBS)
- Fartun Mohamud, Facilitator, FIN
- Kay Ratzlaff, Coordinator of Instructional Resources, Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired
- Alina Rodriguez, Project Manager, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities, Region 11
- Larry Ruble, School Improvement Specialist-Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Region IV, Office of Differentiated Accountability
- Sheryl Sandvoss, Director, FIN

Data Collection

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- School-level administrator interviews and focus groups – 22 participants
- Student focus groups – seven groups, 48 participants
- Action-planning and problem-solving processes – 36 participants
- Review of data from the following sources:
 - Miami-Dade County School District's 2011-2014 LEA Profiles
 - Guiding Questions – District Level Needs Assessment
 - Data compiled from Miami-Dade data systems

Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

Prior to the on-site visit, the school district was provided with questions to use as a guide in the collection of data. The SST and district staff reviewed the data during the problem-solving and action-planning processes. Miami-Dade County School District's questions were related to discipline (SPP 4A and 4B) and LRE. A list of these questions is located in Appendix A of this report.

Guiding Questions – Responses for SPP 4A and SPP 4B, Discipline (Source: Miami-Dade County School District, 2014-15 School Year, As of 9/10/14)

Responses regarding discipline include:

1. The data from the school district's Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS) Report indicated that students with disabilities as well as minority male students are disciplined at a higher rate as compared to the other students.

2. The following data include subgroups for students with disabilities who have OSS for one or more days during the 2014-15 school year:
 - Gender
 - Female – 49 students
 - Male – 286 students
 - Race or Ethnic Group
 - Black – 147 students
 - Asian – three students
 - Hispanic – 170 students
 - Multiracial – two students
 - White – 13 students
 - Disabilities
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder – six students
 - DHH – three students
 - Emotional Behavioral Disability (EBD) – 96 students
 - Gifted – 48 students
 - Intellectual disability – nine students
 - Language impairment – two students
 - Other health impairment – 35 students
 - Specific learning disabilities – 128 students
 - Speech impairment – five students
 - Schools with the highest number of OSS days
 - Jose De Diego Middle School
 - Miami Central Senior High School
 - Miami Southridge Senior High School
 - South Dade Senior High School
3. Evidence-based practices that are being implemented at the school level to decrease the number of OSS days include:
 - Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)
 - Code of Student Conduct (CSC)
Functional Analysis of Behavior (FAB) process
 - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) - Focused on teachers of students identified with an EBD.
 - Response to Intervention-Multi-Tiered System of Supports (Rti-MTSS)
 - Safe-Crisis Management
 - Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports: Multi-Tiered System of Supports for Behavior (45 schools)
4. Attendance initiatives are reflected in the Miami-Dade District Improvement and Assistance Plan.
5. The school district's SP&P reflects professional development and follow-up training in PBIS. The school district's CSC focuses on PBIS. The ESE Monthly Suspension Report is created, and reviewed and monitored by principals and ESE Service Center supervisors.
6. In regard to the implementation of the strategies in the SP&P for targeted indicator performance for 2014-15:
 - Training has occurred for administrators on the CSC. Regional offices support administrators in the use of the CSC.
 - The school district ensures that student behaviors that impede learning are addressed on the IEP (i.e., positive behavioral supports and interventions). Interventions from the BIP must be documented in the student's IEP.

- The school district has created an ESE Student Monthly Suspension Report which is sent to all schools and ESE Service Center supervisors, for principals to review and monitor. All students with disabilities who are suspended are required to have a Manifestation Determination (MD) meeting after the sixth day of suspension and for every suspension thereafter in order to determine whether the pattern of removals constitutes a change of placement.
 - Principals review the suspension data that identifies students whose names appear in the report more than once. For students who are suspended more than once, principals must analyze the length of each suspension, in addition to the number of suspensions. If a student receives short-term suspensions of fewer than 10 days each, an MD may need to be conducted. If the student's behavior is substantially similar to prior behavior that warranted a suspension, the MD considerations would apply. Principals have been advised by the school district to analyze this data on a case-by-case basis to determine whether behavioral interventions have been attempted and whether a change of placement is appropriate.
 - Prior to day six of the OSS, the school is required to review the student's BIP. If necessary, the BIP should be modified. If the student does not have a BIP, the school must immediately conduct an FAB and initiate a BIP. The IEP must contain behavioral goals that reflect the BIP. Prior to initiating the FAB process, parental consent must be obtained. The school level staff is responsible for following through with the FAB process and developing, implementing, and monitoring the BIP.
7. The school district will initiate the following steps in regard to discipline:
- Schools are required to create individualized School-Based Alternatives to Suspension Plans that delineate specific strategies and resources available.
 - The regional offices are required to review any Code 1 or Code 2 violations in the district's CSC that result in suspension.
 - School principals will ensure that schools will adhere to the administrative policy of not utilizing OSS as a punishment for students who commit violations under these codes.
 - School principals will ensure that the schools will continue to adhere to the administrative policy of seeking approval from regional administrators to approve suspension of students who have already accrued 10 or more days of OSS.
 - Extensive training in the implementation and monitoring of FABs and BIPs has begun.
 - School administrators will receive information on involving parents and guardians as resources to reduce suspension and utilizing parental and guardian engagement as a corrective strategy.
 - The school district will provide additional cultural sensitivity trainings for school administrators, especially related to the subgroups of students with disabilities identified above.

**Guiding Questions – Responses for SPP Indicator 5, LRE
(Source: Miami-Dade County School District, 2014-15 School Year, As of 9/10/14)**

Responses regarding LRE include:

1. An analysis by schools indicated that 144 schools or 44 percent of the schools in the Miami-Dade County School District exceeded the targeted BEESS indicator.
2. Evidence-based practices related to LRE have been provided to school instructional, administrative and support personnel, which include:
 - Use of Universal Design for Learning and Accommodations
 - Assistive technology

- Implementation of Models of Support
 - Scheduling of students with disabilities
 - Recognition for high expectations and student ownership
 - The Superintendent’s Advisory Panel Inclusion-Achievement Award has been established to acknowledge schools that increase their inclusion and achievement rates.
3. The LRE and Achievement Review Tool is used to conduct reviews at 60 selected schools, monitor the implementation of evidence-based practices and provide targeted professional development support, modeling and coaching to address schools with low inclusion and achievement rates.
 4. School-level evidenced-based practices are supported by the school district through the following initiatives:
 - Continuous monitoring of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Percentage of Time Spent with Non-Disabled Report;
 - Implementation and oversight of the LRE Achievement Reviews at targeted schools; and
 - Ongoing professional development for principals, assistant principals and staffing specialists for IEP Implementation.
 5. The Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) assessment has been completed with approximately 26 stakeholders from departments across the school district.
 6. LRE is not reflected within the District Strategic Framework, 2009-2014.
 7. In regard to implementing the strategies in the SP&P for SPP Indicator 5 - LRE, the Miami-Dade School District has completed the following:
 - Conducted LRE and Achievement Reviews at 60 targeted schools in collaboration with the FIN during the 2013-2014 school year.
 - Provided professional development in evidenced-based practices of co-teaching structures and models of support for school-level stakeholders, including all principals and assistant principals.
 - In August 2014, in collaboration with FIN, the district developed the BPIE and FIN Services Plan.
 8. During the 2014-15 school year, the following priorities were targeted by the school district to improve indicator SPP 5:
 - Review the Monthly Monitoring of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Percentage of Time Spent with Non-Disabled Report and targeting schools with low percentage of time with non-disabled peers.
 - For schools with low rates of inclusion, “institutionalize” the LRE and Achievement Review process with the goal of providing targeted support to include professional development, modeling, scheduling and coaching.
 - For selected stakeholders, including staffing specialists and curriculum support specialists, provide professional development related to developing IEPs that support LRE.
 - Monitor the collaboration data in the IEPs developed through the Special Education Electronic Management System.
 - Implement the revised 2014-15 Miami-Dade County Public Schools Inclusion Action Plan developed in collaboration with FIN to support LRE.

Results

The following results include additional data and other information obtained for discipline (SPP Indicators 4A and 4B) and LRE (SPP 5) during the on-site visit.

SPP Indicators 4A and 4B – Discipline

SPP 4A – Discipline rates for students with disabilities and nondisabled students are calculated by dividing the number of students who received OSS or expulsions totaling more than 10 days by total-year enrollment as reported at the end of the school year (Survey 5). The risk ratio is calculated by dividing the discipline rate of students with disabilities by the discipline rate of nondisabled students. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that students with disabilities and nondisabled students are equally likely to be suspended or expelled.

| SPP 4A – Discipline Risk Ratios | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 |
| Miami-Dade County School District | 3.36 | 3.14 | 3.18 |
| State | 1.43 | 1.34 | 1.21 |

Source: FDOE, LEA Profiles (2011-2014)

SPP 4B – Discipline risk ratios by racial or ethnic group are calculated for students with disabilities by dividing the discipline rate of a specific racial or ethnic group by the rate of all nondisabled students. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that black students with disabilities are equally likely to be suspended or expelled as all nondisabled students.

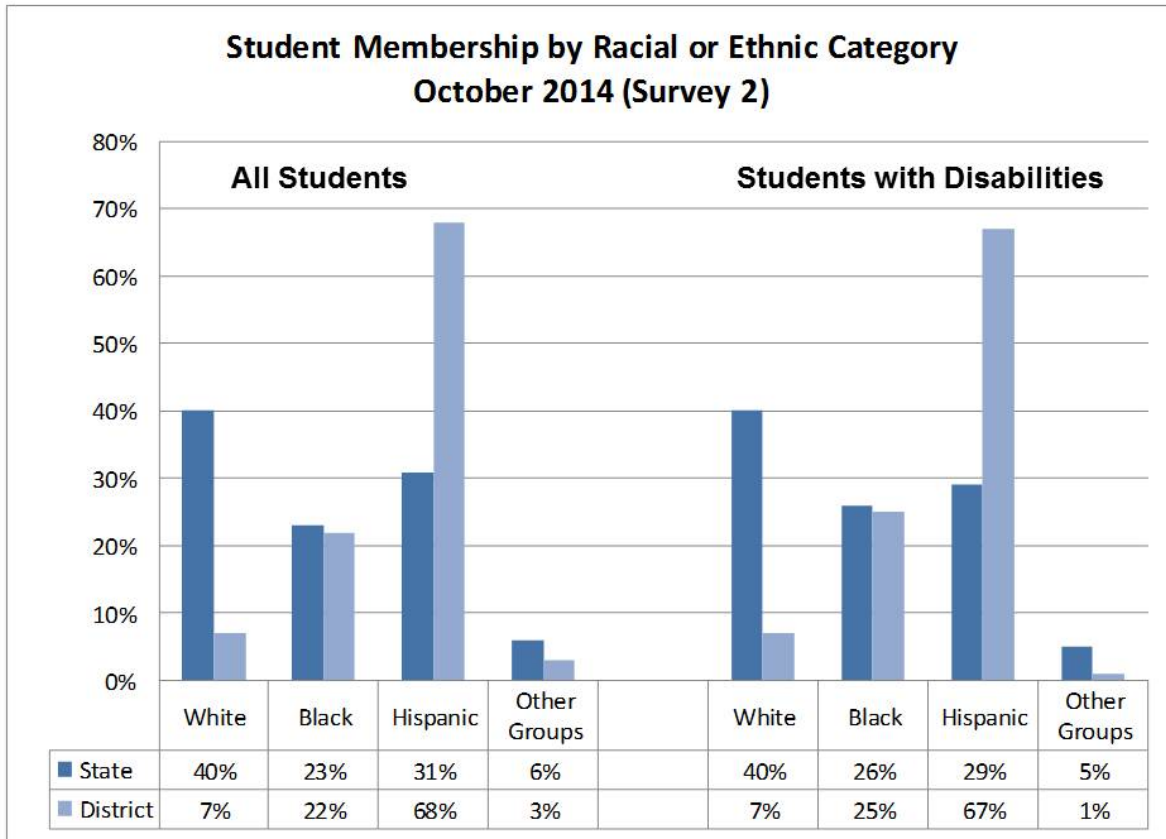
| SPP 4B – Discipline Risk Ratios by Students' Race or Ethnicity | | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| White | 0.86 | 1.99 | 0.80 | 1.50 | 0.74 | 0.86 |
| Black | 2.81 | 6.75 | 2.67 | 6.71 | 2.49 | 7.37 |
| Hispanic | 1.14 | 2.06 | 1.01 | 1.86 | 0.76 | 1.76 |

Source: FDOE, LEA Profiles (2011-14)

Subsequent to the on-site visit in September 2014, the FDOE 2015 LEA Profile identified the following data for SPP 4A, Student Membership by Racial or Ethnic Category and SPP 4B for the 2013-14 school year.

SPP 4A – Discipline Risk Ratio

- State – 1.43
- Miami-Dade School District – 3.24



In comparing the composition and percentage of the student membership in the Miami-Dade School District, the following data represents the discipline risk ratios for the **2013-14** school year.

| 4B – Discipline Risk Ratio by Students’ Race or Ethnicity | | | |
|--|------|------|------|
| Miami-Dade County School District | 1.12 | 7.61 | 1.77 |
| State | 0.81 | 2.92 | 1.03 |

For students with disabilities who are Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander or two or more races, there were fewer than 10 students in the district who were suspended or expelled for more than 10 days.

SPP Indicator 5, LRE

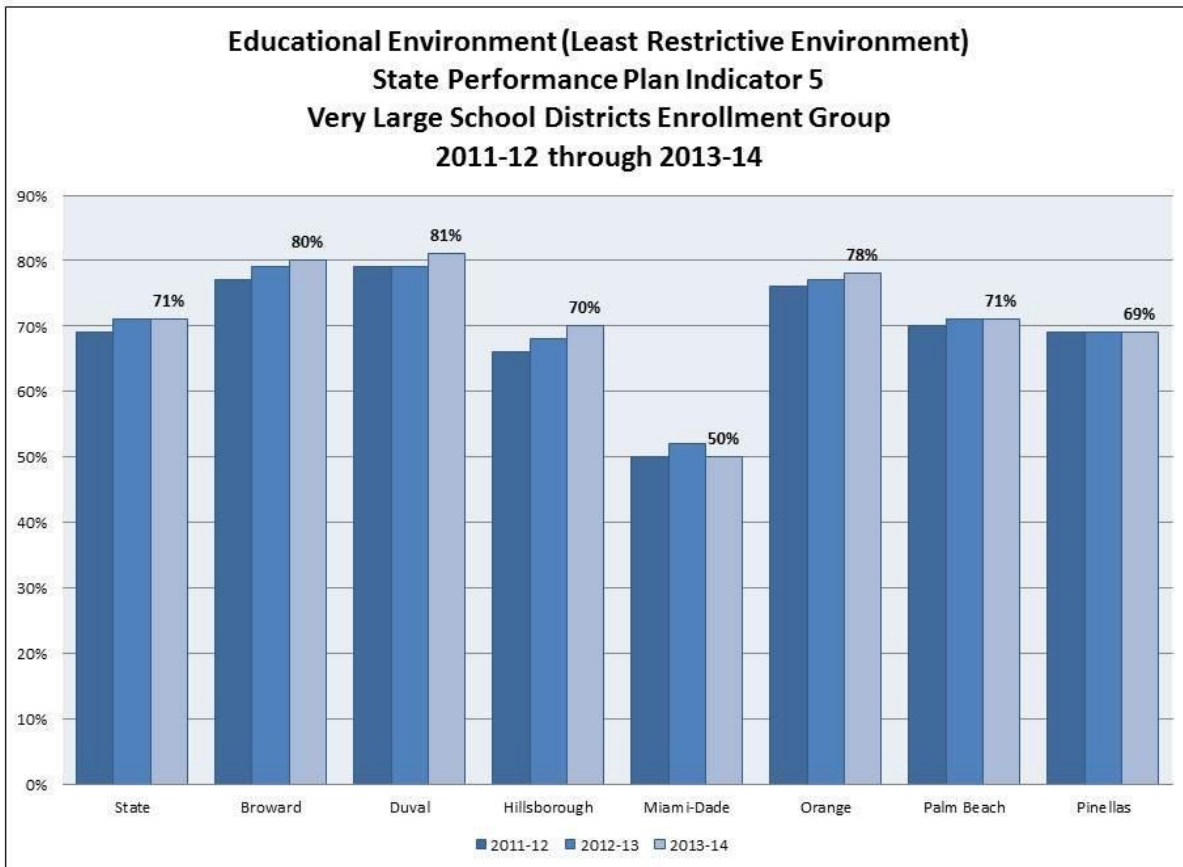
Educational environment percentages include the number of students with disabilities ages six through 21 in regular class, resource room, separate class, and other separate environment, divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages six through 21 reported in October 2014 (Survey 2).

- Regular class includes students with disabilities who spend 80 percent or more of their school week with nondisabled peers.

- Resource room includes students with disabilities spending between 40 percent and 80 percent of their school week with nondisabled peers.
- Separate class includes students with disabilities spending less than 40 percent of their week with nondisabled peers.
- Other separate environment includes students with disabilities served in public or private separate schools, residential placements or hospital or homebound placements.

| Regular Class, Resource Room and Separate Class Placements | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | |
| Miami-Dade County School District | 50% | 52% | 50% |
| Enrollment Group | 68% | 69% | 70% |
| State | 69% | 71% | 71% |
| | | | |
| Miami-Dade County School District | 25% | 24% | 25% |
| Enrollment Group | 14% | 13% | 12% |
| State | 12% | 11% | 10% |
| | | | |
| Miami-Dade County School District | 21% | 20% | 21% |
| Enrollment Group | 14% | 14% | 14% |
| State | 15% | 14% | 15% |
| Source: FDOE, 2014 LEA Profile | | | |

The Miami-Dade School District is a member of the very large school district enrollment group in Florida. The graph below depicts the comparison for regular class placement of the very large school districts for the school years 2011-12 through 2013-14.



Student Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted student focus groups at AMI Kids Dade Marine South, Richmond Heights Middle School, G. Holmes Braddock Senior High School, Jose De Diego Middle School, and Miami Jackson Senior High School. Interview topics included: career and technical education, college preparation, academic experiences, participation in extracurricular activities, accommodations, IEP and IEP team meetings and other resources or services needed.

Middle School (Students with Disabilities)

Comments from the students included the following:

1. The majority of the students indicated that they wanted to attend college, and they had career goals. One student had an interest to attend college to play basketball.
2. The students were aware of postsecondary institutions in Florida as well as in other states.
3. They reported that the teachers talked to them about high school and the option of class selections. They also indicated that they knew what high schools they would be attending.
4. Several students stated they had great support at home, and their families encouraged them to be successful.
5. They were familiar with the IEP team process, and indicated that the IEPs were in place to help them. Some students indicated that they had IEPs because they were involved in fights.

Some students indicated that their IEPs helped them with academics. One student reported that having an IEP helped with controlling anger.

6. They wanted more opportunities to participate in general education classes with more rigorous courses. At least one student did not know whether placement in general education classes in high school would be an option. Several students indicated that they should be in self-contained classes only if their behavior was inappropriate and they were not sure how to get into regular classes.
7. The students commented that the rules in the self-contained classes were not as strict, and that they get poor grades because of their behavior.
8. The students perceived that disciplinary decisions were not always equitable. At least one student commented that if a student with a disability were to get into a fight with a general education student, the student with a disability would get a more severe consequence because of their history. The students mentioned that they had issues controlling anger and reacting inappropriately to situations.
9. Several students reported that in some cases, the teachers reacted to them inappropriately, which caused them (students) to respond inappropriately in class.
10. The students discussed that they needed to take responsibility for their own actions. They agreed that the school needed more counselors to help them with their anger issues and help them figure out why they were fighting, instead of just suspending them.
11. They also indicated that they would like to have more technology at school.

High School (Students with Disabilities)

Comments from the students included the following:

1. The majority of the students had attended their IEP team meetings in the past.
2. Almost all students knew what they wanted to do after high school.
3. At one school, none of the students knew about involvement from outside agencies.
4. At least one student stated that the ESE classes were not very helpful, and that the students did not learn the same things as in the regular education setting. This student stated that the teachers have to go slower for some students, but the pace was too slow for other students.
5. At one school, the students stated that there were clubs. They would like to have more vocational classes added, such as cosmetology and mechanics.
6. Some students stated that they had thought of dropping out of school. However, several students knew of other students who had dropped out. They indicated that the reasons students drop out of school included: the work was too hard; the students used drugs; and some students would rather have “street smarts” than “school smarts.” Several students also stated that they had stayed in school, rather than dropping out, for reasons that included: there was no money if a student dropped out; one would not be able to play sports; and others wanted to make their family proud by staying in school.
7. The majority of the students in the focus group had been suspended for various reasons. They indicated that adults at one school tended to show “favoritism” between the “good kids” and “bad kids.” Several stated that some students (i.e., athletes) could walk around with headphones on, yet other students would be punished for the same offense.
8. Overall, the students stated that they felt respected. Every student had at least one adult that they felt that they could talk with, but none of these adults were at the school.

High School (Students Who Have Not Been Identified as Students with Disabilities)

Comments from the students included the following:

1. All of the students had postsecondary plans after graduation from high school.
2. All of the students had been suspended for various reasons. They stated that if students are suspended, they have to request the homework and the teachers would not automatically provide the work. However, most of the students indicated that they did not request the work.

One student stated that completing the homework would not make a difference if they were not in school for the classroom lesson.

3. Students believed that their behavior in class affected their consequences. They stated that some teachers would try to “push their buttons” to make them “explode.” The students also stated that many teachers were fair.
4. One student shared thoughts about dropping out, but had decided not to, because the student wanted to do better in the future and “be somebody.”
5. The students reported that they do not feel safe at school. Some of the students stated that they had seen or known someone who had been shot in the community.

High School - Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) Impaired or have a Visual Impairment.

Comments from the students included the following:

1. The students had attended IEP team meetings, but did not know what goals were on the IEP.
2. Students were unaware of the transfer of rights at age 18. Students were aware of agencies such as Lighthouse and the Division of Blind Services.
3. Students did not have after-school jobs but were aware of the work experience program.
4. All students were planning to attend college and shared that their teachers had talked to them about the classes needed for college. Students stated that some of their teachers were more helpful than others.
5. Students stated that they were being provided services for their specific disability.
6. Some students stated that they were involved in extracurricular activities.
7. Students also stated that if they needed to talk to an adult they could speak with a school counselor, a teacher of the DHH and other teachers on campus.
8. Students stated that they knew of students who had been suspended.
9. Students stated that they liked the school environment and enjoyed the social part of school and the elective courses. They also indicated that there were too many tests, which caused them to be stressed on a regular basis.

AMI DJJ Program

1. All students who participated in the focus group were working toward a standard diploma. Several had left the program, gone to another program and returned to this one. Students reported that they like the smaller classes at AMI.
2. Students reported that they felt that they were receiving positive support at AMI. They expressed interest in attending programs and activities that took them out of their comfort zone, such as a camping trip to North Carolina where they performed in plays and went scuba diving.
3. They reported that they participated in certification programs, such as food handling and construction.
4. Over the previous year, the majority of their parents participated in IEP team meetings by telephone. All students reported to have participated in their IEP team meetings.

Administrator Interviews and Focus Groups

Interviews and focus groups included administrators from the following schools:

- Agenoria Paschal/Olinda Elementary School
- Allapattah Middle School
- AMI Kids Dade Marine South (DJJ facility)
- Booker T. Washington Senior High School
- Frederick R. Douglass Elementary School
- Gulfstream Elementary School

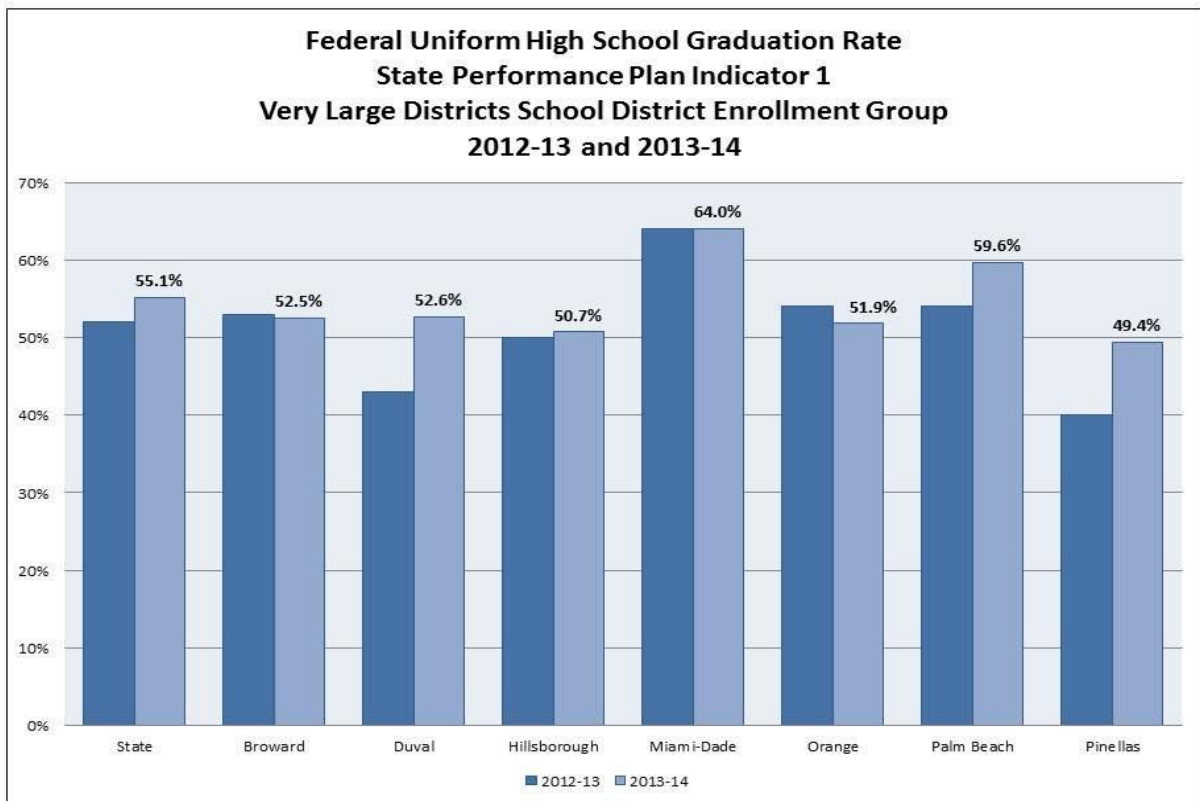
- Jose De Diego Middle School
- Kelsey L. Pharr Elementary School
- Miami Jackson Senior High School
- Miami Southridge Senior High School
- Paul Laurence Dunbar K-8 Center
- Phillis Wheatley Elementary School
- Pine Lake Elementary School
- Richmond Heights Middle School

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

1. They identified the need to increase communication and collaboration with parents who were not involved.
2. There was a desire to implement positive behavior support more consistently for schools, including parent training. Schools that were currently implementing positive behavior support were reporting successful student outcomes.
3. There was a recommendation for stronger communication and collaboration among the vertical feeder-pattern schools (elementary school to middle school to high school).
4. There was an identified need for alternatives to suspension.
5. There was a need for continued training of general education teachers in the areas of best practices for inclusion of students with disabilities and cultural sensitivity training.
6. They shared that the special education teachers had strong content knowledge.
7. They expressed a desire for better understanding of the process of allocations to schools to support students receiving ESE services.

Commendations

1. The school district has increased parent engagement through five regional outreach centers that provide information in Haitian Creole, Spanish and English.
2. The school district serves as an Agency for Persons with Disabilities provider for adult students, up to age 22, to receive a free appropriate public education.
3. The federal uniform high school graduation rate of 64 percent for the 2012-13 school year for students with disabilities exceeds the rate of other school districts in this enrollment group, as well as the state average. The 2013-14 graduation rate remains steady at 64 percent.



- In 2013, 55 percent of students with disabilities who were no longer in secondary school, and had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, were enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school. This rate exceeds the state rate and the enrollment group rate.

Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps

As part of the monitoring and assistance on-site visit, the SST members, ESE Director and representatives from the Miami-Dade County School District participated in an action-planning and problem-solving process. The group reviewed the data collected prior to and during the on-site visit and developed an extensive list of priorities and obstacles. It was decided by the team that the school district would continue to work with designated SST members in developing an action plan, to be implemented by the Miami-Dade ESE department.

| Next Steps | |
|--|---|
| SPP 4A – Suspension and Expulsion | |
| Summary | The Miami-Dade County School District was determined to have significantly disproportionate data for students with disabilities with respect to disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions for more than 10 days. |

| Next Steps | |
|--|--|
| Recommendation: | N/A |
| Required Action: | The Miami-Dade County School District will review patterns of disciplinary actions for the 2014-15 school year, including suspensions and expulsions of students with disabilities, and determine the effect of these results on district policies and procedures. This review will include how suspensions and expulsions compare to all other students with disabilities in the school district. The results of this review will be submitted to BEESS no later than October 30, 2015 . |
| SPP 4B – Suspension and Expulsion | |
| Summary | The Miami-Dade County School District was determined to have significantly disproportionate data for black students with disabilities with respect to disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions for more than 10 days. |
| Recommendation: | N/A |
| Required Action: | The Miami-Dade County School District will review patterns of disciplinary actions for the 2014-15 school year, including suspensions and expulsions of black students with disabilities, and determine the effect of these results on district policies and procedures. This review will include how suspensions and expulsions compare to all other students with disabilities in the school district. The results of this review will be submitted to BEESS no later than October 30, 2015 . |
| SPP 5 – Educational Environment - LRE | |
| Summary: | Based on the data obtained before and during the district’s on-site monitoring visit, the school district was below the enrollment group and state averages for regular class placement for the 2011-12 to the 2013-14 school years. |
| Recommendations: | <p>According to s. 1003.57, F.S., once every three years, each school district and school shall complete a BPIE assessment with a FIN facilitator and include the results of the BPIE assessment and all planned short-term and long-term improvement efforts in the school district’s SP&P. BPIE is an internal assessment process designed to facilitate the analysis, implementation and improvement of inclusive educational practices at the district and school team levels.</p> <p>The district should review district-wide services to students with disabilities to ensure that there are procedures in place that increase a more uniform distribution of special programs across schools and regions to more closely mirror the district’s percent of students with disabilities.</p> <p>The Miami-Dade County School District completed the BPIE process during the 2013-14 school year. In collaboration with FIN and other stakeholders, the Miami-Dade County School District should continue</p> |

| Next Steps | |
|--|--|
| | with the implementation of the action plan developed as the result of the BPIE. A FIN facilitator is available to assist the Miami-Dade County School District in identifying how FIN can provide support to the school district (http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/). |
| Required Action: | N/A |
| Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process | |
| Summary | <p>Additional action-planning and problem solving for other priorities for the Miami-Dade County School District have been scheduled by the assigned SST liaison for the school district and the ESE director.</p> <p>The SST team, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan(s) and determine additional next steps, as appropriate. The results of this evaluation will be submitted to BEESS by December 11, 2015.</p> |

Technical Assistance

1. **Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders** (Florida's PBS Project) may be accessed at http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/RTIB%20Guide%20101811_final.pdf and provides an overview of the critical components of an MTSS for behavior. These critical components describe systems changes that are necessary for a results-driven ESE system.
2. The district's **ESE Policies and Procedures** document provides district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual, physical or mechanical restraint and seclusion developed by the FDOE. The school district's document for the 2014-15 through 2015-16 school years may be accessed at <http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx>.
3. The technical assistance paper entitled **Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Restraint and Seclusion with Students with Disabilities**, dated October 14, 2011, may be accessed at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-6212/dps-2011-165.pdf>. This document provides guidance regarding the use, documenting, reporting and monitoring of restraint and seclusion with students with disabilities in school districts, including (a) when restraint or seclusion might be used, (b) considerations when selecting a training program for restraint, (c) what should be documented, (d) parent notification and reporting, and (e) monitoring use. It also contains information about s. 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities.
4. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released **School Discipline Guidance** in the January 2014, Volume 4, Issue 1 of the **Office of Special Education Programs Monthly Update**. This package will assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. The resource documents listed below are included in the package, and are available at <http://www.ed.gov/school-discipline>:
 - **Dear Colleague** guidance letter on civil rights and discipline;
 - **Guiding Principles** document that draws from emerging research and best practices;
 - **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources** that indexes federal technical assistance and other resources; and
 - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations** that catalogue state laws and regulations related to school discipline.
5. The Project 10: Transition Education Network, <http://www.projct10.info/>, assists Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and post-school outcomes. Project 10 serves as the primary conduit between BEESS and school district personnel in addressing law and policy, effective practices, and research-based interventions in the area of transition services for youth with disabilities. The project also supports transition initiatives developed through the BEESS Strategic Plan.

Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance
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Appendix A

Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

Appendix A: Guiding Questions – District-Level Needs Assessment

1. What are the most current data levels on each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
2. What is the gap between BEESS expected level(s) of targeted indicators and your district's current level(s) of targeted indicators?
3. Do data indicate equity issues related to the selected BEESS indicators? Are there subgroups for which the gap between expected and goal levels of performance and current levels of performance is more or less significant?
 - Gender
 - Race or ethnic group
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - Students with disabilities (by each sub-group)
 - English language learners
 - Comparison within and across above sub-groups
4. Disaggregate district-level indicator data to school levels. Which schools are contributing to total district frequency for each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
5. Disaggregate school-level indicator data by grade level. Which grades within each school are contributing to total school frequency for each of the targeted BEESS indicators?
6. Disaggregate between type of school (elementary, middle school and high school) by student outcomes.
7. What evidence-based practices are currently planned for use or implementation at the school level?
8. Are the expected evidence-based practices occurring sufficiently?
9. If expected evidence-based practices are not occurring or not occurring sufficiently, why not? (What are some potential barriers specific to targeted BEESS indicators at the school level?)
10. How are school-level evidence-based practices being supported by the district specific to BEESS indicators being targeted for improvement?
11. Are district supports for school-level practices being provided sufficiently?
12. If district supports are not occurring or not occurring sufficiently, why not? (What are some potential barriers specific to targeted BEESS indicators at the district level?)
13. What strategies, initiatives and resources have been identified in the District Improvement and Assistance Plan (DIAP) with regard to achieving annual measurable outcomes targets for students with disabilities?
14. As applicable, has the mid-year reflection based on mid-year assessment data been completed, and what, if any, adjustments have been made to the DIAP with regard to strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities?
15. What does the ESE Policies and Procedures document reflect with regard to the district's goal to improve targeted indicator performance? Did the district achieve the goal set during the prior year?
16. What is occurring to implement the strategies in the SP&P with regard to targeted indicator performance?
17. Based on all of the above answers, what priorities will be targeted to improve BEESS targeted indicators?

**Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following is a list of acronyms, abbreviations and terms used within this report.

| | |
|------------|---|
| BEESS | Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services |
| BIP | Behavioral intervention plan |
| BPIE | Best Practices for Inclusive Education |
| CEIS | Coordinated early intervening services |
| CFR | Code of Federal Regulations |
| CSC | Code of Student Conduct |
| DHH | Deaf and Hard of Hearing |
| DIAP | District Improvement and Assistance Plan |
| DJJ | Department of Juvenile Justice |
| DRM | Dispute Resolution and Monitoring |
| EBD | Emotional behavioral disability |
| ESE | Exceptional student education |
| FAB | Functional Analysis of Behavior |
| FDOE | Florida Department of Education |
| FIN | Florida Inclusion Network |
| F.S. | Florida Statutes |
| IDEA | Individuals with Disabilities Education Act |
| IEP | Individual educational plan |
| ISS | Instructional Support Services |
| LEA | Local educational agency |
| LRE | Least restrictive environment |
| MD | Manifestation determination |
| MTSS | Multi-tiered system of support |
| OSS | Out-of-school suspension |
| PBIS | Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support |
| PBS | Positive Behavior Support |
| Project 10 | Project 10: Transition Education Network |
| RMTC:DHH | Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing |
| SP&P | Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures |
| SPP | State Performance Plan |
| SST | State Support Team |



Florida Department of Education
Pam Stewart, Commissioner

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