

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

**Indian River County School District
January 26-28, 2016**



This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), Division of K-12 Public Schools, Florida Department of Education (FDOE), and is available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/mon-home.asp>. For information on available resources, contact the BEESS Resource and Information Center (BRIC).

BRIC website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/clerhome.asp>

Bureau website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

Email: BRIC@fldoe.org

Telephone: 850-245-0475

Fax: 850-245-0987



State Board of Education

Marva Johnson, *Chair*
John R. Padget, *Vice Chair*
Members
Gary Chartrand
Tom Grady
Rebecca Fishman Lipsey
Michael Olenick
Andy Tuck

Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

September 9, 2016

Dr. Mark J. Rendell, Superintendent
Indian River County School District
1900 25th Street
Vero Beach, Florida 32960-3395

Dear Superintendent Rendell:

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) is pleased to provide you with the 2015-16 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for Indian River 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 January 26-28, 2016. Those information sources included interviews with district and school staff, local educational agency profiles, and an action-planning and problem-solving process.

The Indian River County School District was selected for an on-site visit for the following focus areas related to students with disabilities: coordinated early intervening services for discipline, discipline (4B) and incidents of restraint. The on-site visit was conducted by a state support team (SST) that included BEESS staff and discretionary project staff.

The 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those State Performance Plan indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for 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, career and life readiness, which include: increasing standard diploma graduates; decreasing the number of students dropping out of school; increasing regular class placement; decreasing the need for seclusion and restraint; and eliminating disproportionality in eligibility identification and discipline.

Mr. Michael Ferrentino, prior Director of ESE, and his staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for and throughout the on-site visit. In addition, school-level personnel welcomed SST members and demonstrated a continued commitment to the education of students in the school district. This report will be posted on the BEESS website and may be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/e/mon-home.asp>.

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

Superintendent Rendell
September 9, 2016
Page Two

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the Indian River 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,

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

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

Enclosure

cc: Heather Clark
Heidi Metcalf
David Wheeler

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

Indian River County School District

January 26-28, 2016

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

Table of Contents

Authority.....	1
Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance Process	1
Background Information.....	1
School Selection.....	2
On-Site Activities.....	3
On-Site Visit Team	3
Data Collection	3
Status Update for the 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance Visit	4
2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Results.....	6
Coordinated Early Intervening Services – Discipline.....	7
Discipline Rate and Risk Ratio (4B).....	7
Incidents of Restraint.....	7
Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment).....	8
Interviews Conducted.....	8
Administrator Focus Groups	8
Multi-tiered System of Support Team Focus Group	9
Teacher Focus Groups.....	10
Student Focus Groups (includes both students with disabilities and nondisabled students)...	11
School Walk-Through Debriefings	12
Commendations.....	12
2015-16 Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps	13
Technical Assistance	16
State Support Team for Indian River County School District	17

Authority

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

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

Under 34 CFR §300.646(b)(2), if a state identifies significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity in a local educational agency (LEA) with respect to the identification of children as children with disabilities, the identification of children in specific disability categories, the placement of children with disabilities in particular educational settings or the taking of disciplinary actions, the LEA must use the maximum amount (15 percent) of funds allowable for comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (CEIS) for children in the LEA who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic or behavioral supports in order to succeed in a general education environment. These children should include particularly, but not exclusively, children in those groups that were significantly over-identified.

Section 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities, establishes documentation, reporting and monitoring requirements for districts regarding the use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities. It also requires districts to have policies and procedures in place that govern parent notification, incident reporting, data collection and monitoring the use of restraint or seclusion for students with disabilities. As required, the FDOE has established district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of restraint and seclusion. These standards are included in each district's Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures (SP&P) document.

ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process

Background Information

The 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance process focuses on those State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for CEIS and the following indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities:

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

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

The ESE Monitoring and Assistance process includes four phases:

- Phase 1 is composed of planning activities that occur in advance of the first on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 is the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST). **The initial on-site visit was May 14-15, 2014.**
- Phase 3 is follow-up and post-initial visit activities, which are conducted by a designated follow-up team, as determined by the SST, and identification of the ongoing data that will be collected.
- Phase 4 is evaluation of the effectiveness of the school district's action plan, and should include participation of the comprehensive team that was involved in Phase 1.

In a letter dated September 21, 2015, the superintendent of the Indian River County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: CEIS for discipline, discipline (4B) and incidents of restraint.

School Selection

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

- Sebastian River High School
- Vero Beach High School
- Oslo Middle School
- Wabasso Center School

On-Site Activities

On-Site Visit Team

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

FDOE, BEESS

- David Wheeler, School Psychology Consultant, Student Support Services
- Cathy Howard-Williams, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
- Liz Conn, Program Director, DRM
- Laurie Epps, Program Specialist, Instructional Support Services

FDOE, BEESS Discretionary Projects

- Jayna Jenkins, Facilitator, Problem Solving: Response to Intervention (PS:RtI)
- Robyn Vanover, Technical Assistance Specialist, Problem Solving: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Eileen Orr, Project Manager, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Bill Pearlman, Facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
- Sandy Akre, Director, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Associate Centers (FDLRS), Galaxy
- Rosie Portera Vaughn, Clinical Support Specialist, Florida Atlantic University, Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)
- Heidi Hyche, Director, Keiser University Multidisciplinary Center

Data Collection

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Review of recent data
- Welcome session with district and school-level staff – 34 participants
- Administrator focus groups – 10 participants
- Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) team focus group – 7 participants
- Teacher focus groups – 16 participants
- Student focus groups – 11 participants
- School walk-through debriefings – six classrooms
- Action-planning and problem-solving process – 26 participants

The district completed the Best Practices for Inclusive Education (BPIE) assessment with FIN facilitators on March 18, 2014. The service plan was updated on October 14, 2015, and included the following goals:

- Goal 1: District processes and protocols will be used to improve least restrictive environment (LRE) at schools and increase achievement for students with disabilities in reading and math.
- Goal 2: Continue to develop district capacity with identified district team members in the area of flexible scheduling in order to implement the process and meet yearly district targets for SPP Indicator 5.
- Goal 3: Continue to develop district and school-based capacity in the area of collaborative teaching and planning, including student engagement, outcomes, increased achievement and models of service delivery.

Status Update for the 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance Visit

The following information is taken from the **2013-14 on-site monitoring** report. A status update to the required actions and recommendations has been added for each area listed.

Next Steps	
Discipline (4B)	
Summary	The district was found to have a significant discrepancy for black students with disabilities in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year.
Recommendations	Continue professional development for teachers and staff in the area of positive behavior support.
Required Actions	By January 15, 2015 , the school district must review current school and district policies related to student code of conduct to determine patterns of suspension. Outcomes of this review and any resulting additions or changes to the district's plan must be provided to BEESS by January 30, 2015 .
Status Update	<p>On January 30, 2015, the district provided BEESS the required documentation regarding a review of school and district policies related to student code of conduct. All district and school-based stakeholders collaboratively worked to increase consistency and sensitivity in school disciplinary practices to decrease the disproportionate removal of student-specific subpopulations from classroom for disciplinary reasons. The team identified goals, action steps and progress monitoring through the use of an eight-step problem-solving process. The action plan contains four major strategies components: increasing accountability for ongoing, data-driven problem solving, including problem analysis and progress monitoring; refining and realigning the roles of early intervening services support personnel with the goals identified in relation to action-planning; strengthening policies, procedures and practices to specifically address issues of disproportionality, and providing data-driven professional development to build capacity at the district and school level to address disparities in school disciplinary practices.</p> <p>Florida's PS:RtI Project has provided technical assistance at monthly district MTSS meetings, supported the development of early warning system (EWS) indicators and implementation of an EWS compliant with statutory requirements. In addition, the project has facilitated monthly virtual and face-to-face personal learning community meetings, and provided feedback on documentation forms for online implementation in the district's student information database system.</p>
Restraint and Seclusion	
Summary	According to the district's SP&P, "Prone restraints are utilized when safety risks to students are increased due to the intensity of an event. A seated restraint may be inadequate to secure the student and prevent injury due to biting behavior. Once additional staff arrives a decision may

Next Steps	
	<p>be made to utilize a prone restraint.”</p> <p>At the center school it was noted, upon review of restraint reports, that there was a pattern of the use of prone restraint. School staff indicated that prone restraint is used only after less restrictive methods are unsuccessful.</p>
Recommendations	N/A
Required Actions	<p>In the case of prone restraints, the district must document other restraints leading to the use of prone restraint. Restraints at this location must be closely monitored by the district; problem solving regarding students who have been restrained through the prone method must be documented. This documentation must be provided to BEESS by January 30, 2015.</p>
Status Update	<p>On January 30, 2015, the district provided a district and school progress report that captured the collaborative efforts and district-based problem-solving strategies utilized to address the issues regarding classroom removal and restraint.</p> <p>The procedures included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving by district ESE and Student Support Department and Development of Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Path planning: Planning alternative tomorrows – EWS database: Development and ongoing refinement of EWS database – Problem solving for restraints: ongoing school- and student-level problem solving about restraint rates – Restorative justice facilitators: Development of district training capacity to train school-based restorative justice facilitators • Direct supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Universal design for learning: Implementation of universal design for learning grant plan in ESE inclusion classroom – District self-monitoring: ongoing district self-monitoring for restraints and IEP compliance – Instructional support: Provision of direct instructional supports and coaching in ESE classrooms – ESE department liaisons: Assignment of district ESE program specialists as liaisons for school ESE teams – Restorative justice: Initial implementation of restorative justice • Refinement of policies and procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Home-based instruction and a free and appropriate public education (FAPE): Refinement of procedures to ensure home-based instruction and FAPE for students – Revision of student code of conduct: Revision of code of conduct to include progressive discipline – Manifestation determinations: Drafting of revised procedures for manifestation determination reviews • Provide data-based professional development to address disparities in discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Professional crisis management (PCM) – Verbal de-escalation

Next Steps	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – English language arts progress monitoring for secondary schools – Tiered behavioral supports – Student code of conduct and progressive discipline – Crisis Prevention Institute nonviolent crisis intervention – MTSS framework – Schoolwide behavioral frameworks – Curriculum and instruction newsletters – Social emotional learning – Tiers 2 and 3 problem solving for facilitators – MTSS for Tier 3 individual problem solving <p>SEDNET provides mental health counseling to designated students, purchased training materials for implementation of PCM for schools with students with emotional or behavioral disabilities and collaborated with the Indian River County School District to offer five full-day PCM training opportunities. Trainings included physical and verbal techniques for preventing, de-escalating and safely physically managing students during pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis.</p>
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process	
Summary	<p>Additional action planning and problem solving for other priorities for the school district in regard to restraint and discipline will be scheduled by the SST liaison for the school district and the ESE director.</p> <p>By January 20, 2015, 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.</p>
Status Update	<p>On January 30, 2015, documentation regarding the district’s action plan was provided to BEESS. In addition, the district indicated they will continue to implement the district-guided self monitoring of schools regarding restraint and discipline. The following next steps were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of problem solving • Continuation of monitoring action planning • Expansion of professional development opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promoting Procedural Justice of At-Risk Youth – MTSS: Differentiation and Intensification of Instruction • Identify ways of scaling up intervention efforts • Continue to build capacity for problem-solving, intervention implementation and professional development • Work toward institutionalization and sustainability of promising practices

2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Results

The following data are related to the focus areas and activities for the 2015-16 ESE Monitoring and Assistance for Indian River County School District.

Coordinated Early Intervening Services – Discipline

Districts are required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA funds for CEIS if incidents of removal of students with disabilities through in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS) or expulsion for students with disabilities of any given race are at least **3.5** times more likely to occur when compared to all other races combined. The school district’s 2013-14 data indicated that the incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS or expulsion was **3.61** times more likely to occur when compared to students with disabilities of all other races combined.

The 2014-15 data indicated that the incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS or expulsion is **2.71** times more likely to occur when compared to students with disabilities of all other races combined. During the 2016-17 school year, the district will not be required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA funds for CEIS.

Discipline Rate and Risk Ratio (4B)

Discipline risk ratios for students with disabilities are calculated by first dividing the number of students with disabilities from a specific racial and ethnic group who received out-of-school suspensions or expulsions totaling more than 10 days, by the total-year enrollment of students with disabilities from the same racial and ethnic group. Second, the number of all nondisabled students who received out-of-school suspensions or expulsions totaling more than 10 days is divided by the total number of nondisabled students. The risk ratio is calculated by dividing the result of the first step by the result of the second step. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that students with disabilities of a given race are no more likely to be suspended or expelled than all nondisabled students. The following chart indicates that students with disabilities whose race is black are **5.95** times more likely to be suspended or expelled than nondisabled students. Subsequent to the on-site visit, BEESS received 4B data for the 2014-15 school year, which indicated a risk ratio of **7.90**, an increase from the 2013-14 data.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Indian River	4.47	*	5.95	7.90
State	2.67	2.50	2.92	2.72

* Less than 10 students with disabilities suspended or expelled for greater than 10 school days.

Incidents of Restraint

According to the FDOE’s restraint and seclusion database, the number of incidents of restraint in the district has increased since the 2013-14 school year. The following chart includes the number of incidents of restraint in the district from the 2012-13 school year to the 2014-15 school year.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Number of Incidents*	89	89	160
Number of Students	51	39	57

*Average incidents of restraint for 2014-15 size-alike districts is **53**.

Restraint data for August 1, 2015 through January 31, 2016, indicated there was an increase of nine incidents of restraint with 14 more students being restrained, for an incident percentage rate increase of **16** percent compared to this same time frame in the 2014-15 school year.

Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)

To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are to be educated with students who are nondisabled. These LRE data are calculated by dividing the number of students with disabilities aged 6 through 21 served in the regular class for 80 percent or more of the day, by the total number of students with disabilities aged 6 through 21 reported in October (survey 2). These data do not include parentally placed private school students or students served in Florida county jails, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice facilities or Florida Department of Corrections.

The district’s 2015 LEA Profile indicates that the rate for regular and resource placement was better than the state rate for their enrollment group. The district’s percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class during the 2014-15 school year was slightly under the state rate, but above the average rate of size-alike districts in Florida. Subsequent to the on-site visit, BEESS received LRE data for 2015-16, which indicated **74.7** percent placement rate in the regular classroom while the state rate is **73.0** percent.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Indian River	71.0%	71.9%	72.4%	74.7%
State	70.7%	71.3%	74.4%	73.0%

Because placement of students with disabilities in the LRE has improved and is commensurate with the state average, LRE was not addressed during the 2015-16 on-site monitoring visit.

Interviews Conducted

Administrator Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted a focus group at the district office with administrative staff responsible for suspension and expulsion (CEIS – Discipline and Discipline 4B) from Sebastian High School, Vero Beach High School, Gifford Middle School, Oslo Middle School, Citrus Elementary School, Glendale Elementary School, Indian River Academy and the Alternative Education Center.

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

- Improving discipline policies, practices and outcomes has been an administrative priority at the district and school levels since the 2013-14 school year. Each school uses discipline data and an eight-step problem-solving process to develop an action plan. The superintendent has prioritized discipline and holds schools accountable for implementation and results.
- There is an emphasis on data-based problem solving supported by a new student information database (Focus®) and monthly analysis of discipline data by the district MTSS team that facilitates school-based problem solving and decision making with real-time data and EWS indicators.

- The discipline policies and practices have been modified to reflect a preventive and restorative, rather than punitive, approach to discipline. District staff has been communicating the mindset change to staff that discipline is about changing behavior, not punishing students. There is a need to help staff shift their mindset to this approach.
- The district is implementing positive, proactive strategies and programs including restorative justice, responsible thinking, conscious discipline strategies, BRIDGE Program, M&M Club, peer mediation, Peace Works Foundation, and self-reflection center.
- The district's code of conduct was revised in 2014-15 to reflect restorative practices and positive intervention approaches. The zero-tolerance policy was changed so students do not automatically receive 10-day suspensions for certain offenses and ISS now provides tutoring and counseling.
- Schools are working to improve relationships with parents and the community by involving parents in the discipline process and enlisting community collaboration and feedback when developing policy.
- Training has been provided in cultural sensitivity and verbal de-escalation at selected schools, with plans to expand.
- The district is striving to develop a culture of caring schools and building relationships with students and families.
- There is insufficient staff and resource allocation to address Tier 3 support needs.
- There is a need for professional development for teachers in de-escalation and positive behavioral intervention strategies.

Members of the SST conducted a focus group with administrative staff from Wabasso Center School.

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

- Transition from Wabasso Center School to a general education campus is structured and highly supportive of student success.
- Clear procedures have been developed for separate school placement.
- The school engages in community supports.
- There are clearly defined processes and procedures regarding transferring students to Wabasso Center School.
- About 70 percent of the school staff at Wabasso Center School has received PCM training.
- The school staff is engaging in collaborative planning and problem solving for incidents of restraint. After reviewing the data, individual student needs and increasing behaviors are also reviewed. The district collaborates with outside agencies to develop a plan for home and school.
- The school is engaging in data-driven decisions.
- There is a clear vision for the Transition to Work Program and with three transition classes, students are going out into the community and job opportunities are being developed by staff.

Multi-tiered System of Support Team Focus Group

Members of the SST conducted a focus group with the MTSS problem-solving team at Sebastian River High School.

Themes that emerged from the MTSS team focus group included the following:

- Factors contributing to racial disparities in discipline include size of schools; a view of

discipline as punitive rather than corrective or restorative; challenges adjusting to changing student demographics; community issues or conflicts overflowing into schools; difficulty planning and implementing intensive (Tier 3) supports at the secondary level; disconnect between ESE and general education (students with disabilities are “their” students rather than “our” students).

- The district has developed an infrastructure and support for data-based problem solving and implements interventions using a multi-tiered framework that is innovative and student-outcome focused.
- The MTSS team is part of a district leadership team with district-level involvement and support.
- District leadership and support staff have been working to change beliefs, mindsets and cultures around discipline and student engagement.
- A revised student code of conduct reflects a mind shift that incorporates positive school climate, prevention and restorative disciplinary practices.
- There is a focus on relationship building through the use of restorative justice practices and mentoring programs (e.g., Check & Connect, Conscious Discipline, Skill Streaming, Second Step, mental health counseling, behavior contracts and social skills training).
- Student Services staff developed a crosswalk between social-emotional learning skills (e.g., responsible decision-making, relationship skills, self-management, social awareness and self-awareness) and teaching practices, with strategies for teachers to reinforce each of the social-emotional skills.
- Professional development is being provided to instructional staff, support staff and school administrators to reduce disproportionality. Training includes verbal de-escalation, crisis intervention, cultural competence and restorative justice training for general education teachers; differentiating instruction in Tier 1; and problem analysis and action planning for teachers and teams.
- Behavioral Discussion Board, an interactive, online page on the district website allows teachers to access training and articles and to post questions.
- School psychologists and student support specialists are assigned to targeted schools. Staff and students report that added support is making a difference, but resource allocation is not adequate to meet the demand.
- More flexibility is needed for site-based decision making.
- Limited time is set aside for professional development.
- The paradigm shift and mind set have not yet been fully embraced by instructional personnel. The mind set includes ownership of all students.

Teacher Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with teachers from Vero Beach High School, Oslo Middle School and Wabasso Center School.

Themes that emerged from the teacher focus groups from Vero Beach High School and Oslo Middle School included the following:

- Professional development has been provided for staff at selected schools in de-escalation, cultural sensitivity and other interventions to reduce suspension.
- School staff is attempting to reduce exclusionary discipline practices by implementing alternatives to suspension, such as using restorative justice in middle and high schools and using behavior tracking forms to keep students in class.
- Staff is being more proactive in recognizing positive behavior (e.g., Grade 6 positive behavior recognition at Oslo Middle School).

- Students have the opportunity to complete homework when assigned to ISS, but there is some concern that IEP accommodations are not being implemented in ISS consistently.
- Students in intensive reading are grouped together in all subjects and therefore have limited exposure to other general education students.
- Teachers need a common planning time.
- More staff are required to support students with personal and social-emotional needs.
- Transportation limits community-school involvement of students.
- There is insufficient support for students transitioning from Grade 8 to Grade 9.
- Schoolwide behavior approaches are lacking.
- Students are in need of social skills training.
- One school expressed concern about the use of ISS and OSS, including the use of OSS for tardiness, skipping, and not attending Saturday school. Another school expressed concern regarding the practice of allowing students to choose between ISS or OSS for a disciplinary consequence.
- There is a small number of students that account for the majority of discipline problems.

Themes that emerged from the teacher focus group from Wabasso Center School included the following:

- There is dynamic leadership in place that supports and values the teachers.
- Teachers have high expectations for the students.
- Positive behavioral supports are campuswide.
- Layered incentives are provided by the teachers for the individual student and the classroom regarding behavior and academics.
- Frequency of restraints initially increases when students transition to Wabasso Center School from regular school due to intensive needs.

Student Focus Groups (includes both students with disabilities and nondisabled students)

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with students from Sebastian River High School, Vero Beach High School and Oslo Middle School.

Comments from the student focus groups included the following:

- There are positive, beneficial relationships with support personnel such as school psychologists and social workers. There is a strong need for more staff, noting that support personnel are only assigned to the school a couple days per week.
- There is not enough access to school counselors.
- Students are comfortable talking to specific adults and teachers are generally supportive of all students within the classroom settings.
- A majority of students intend to graduate and are able to articulate college and career goals. Someone from the school had already spoken with them regarding postsecondary goals and plans.
- There are multiple opportunities for student engagement. At one school, students initiated joining clubs, which provided an opportunity to connect with the school community and is viewed as preventive.
- For the most part, the school climate is positive. Even students with discipline issues were proud of their school and provided positive comments.
- IEP accommodations are implemented and students with disabilities feel that they benefit from support and assistance outside the regular class.
- Parent work schedules and school meetings often conflict, making attendance difficult.

- Many students perceive that teachers do not care about or respect them, and report being treated differently based on a reputation for being “bad.”
- There is a strong perception that discipline is differentially applied based on race and color. A consensus among the students at one of the high schools is that black students receive harsher disciplinary consequences than other students.
- There is a need for more relevant, engaging instruction with more collaborative learning opportunities (e.g., group work). Teachers need to provide more instructional support to students and know how to scaffold instruction.
- More support is needed when students transition from elementary to middle school, and from middle to high school.
- ISS and OSS are not helpful as students return to school and repeat the behavior.
- More recognition needed for the student and school achievements.
- Could the school start time be changed to start later as students have to get up too early for school or to catch the bus? Currently school starts at 7:15 a.m., and ends at 2:05 p.m., which means that some students catch the bus at 6:00 a.m.

School Walk-Through Debriefings

School walk-through debriefings were conducted at Vero Beach High School, Oslo Middle School and Wabasso Center School regarding student engagement, school climate, and evidence of academic and behavioral expectations.

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

- Students were actively engaged in learning in all three schools; collaborative learning activities were observed and students freely asked for guidance and clarification. Technology was available in classrooms, but was not used during the walk-throughs.
- Campuses appeared calm and secure; faculty and staff vested in creating a positive and safe learning environment. Exceptional education classrooms were in a separate wing at the middle school. Classrooms were well organized with visuals in some of the classrooms visited.
- Rules and expectations were displayed in classrooms at the high school; students were aware of expectations and classroom procedures. At the middle school, learning goals were posted in science, technology, engineering and math classrooms, but not in the ESE classrooms.

Commendations

1. The professionalism and dedication of the staff, the culture of data-based problem solving, the adoption of innovative thinking and practices, and the student-oriented focus of services and supports were outstanding. Indian River County School District should be considered an exemplary district in applying a problem-solving approach to districtwide issues and implementation of an MTSS. The district is to be commended for demonstrating strength in the following areas:
 - Adoption of innovative policies and practices to address disproportionality, including revision of the student code of conduct, implementation of evidence-based practices (e.g., restorative justice), and development of a crosswalk between social-emotional learning skills and teaching practices.
 - Use of Data Dashboard to facilitate data analysis and problem solving.
 - Use of web based Behavioral Discussion Board as a professional development tool.
 - Alignment of professional development with trainings related to district initiatives and

areas of need identified through problem solving (e.g., targeted for reducing students with disabilities suspended over 10 days).

2. Based on 2014-15 data, the percentage of students with disabilities who graduate with a standard diploma in the district (79 percent) is significantly higher than the state average (62 percent) and the average for districts of comparable size (61 percent).
3. Based on 2014-15 data, the dropout rate for students with disabilities (4 percent) is significantly lower than the state rate (19 percent).

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

The BEESS on-site visit team debriefed the district leadership team by sharing impressions gathered through data review, staff and student focus groups, and school walk-through debriefings conducted during the on-site visit and guided a discussion anchored in the domains of district leadership best practices. The Indian River School District team was asked to reflect upon the leadership best practice domains of:

1. Establishing and articulating a clear, consistent vision with a sense of urgency for change;
2. Maintaining a focus on schools;
3. Creating internal and external relationships based upon mutual respect and shared responsibility;
4. Engaging in expert problem solving; and
5. Investing in professional development in light of the findings of the SST.

Information gathered during the on-site visit indicated that the district was demonstrating or initiating leadership best practices in each of the domains. Given the comprehensiveness of the district’s problem solving and action planning which was initiated by the district prior to the on-site visit, no additional action planning was deemed necessary. The district will continue to problem solve and refine their action plan based on ongoing data and progress.

Next Steps	
CEIS – Discipline	
Summary	The 2013-14 data indicated that the incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS or expulsion was 3.61 times more likely to occur when compared to students with disabilities of all other races combined. The 2014-15 data indicated that incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS or expulsion is 2.71 times more likely to occur when compared to students with disabilities of all other races. The district will not be required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA funds for CEIS during the 2016-17 school year.
Recommendations	Continue to monitor data for CEIS – Discipline.
Required Actions	N/A
Discipline (4B)	

Next Steps	
Summary	The district- and school-based stakeholders will continue to work collaboratively to increase consistency and cultural sensitivity in school disciplinary practices to decrease the disproportionate removal of students from specific subpopulations from the classroom for disciplinary reasons.
Recommendations	The district will continue to collaborate with the SST and district staff to implement problem-solving strategies and monitor progress.
Required Actions	<p>The district must review 4B data quarterly and engage in data-based problem solving focusing on disproportionality in discipline.</p> <p>Quarterly 4B data and the summary of the problem-solving must be provided to the district’s BEESS liaison on the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● September 30, 2016 ● December 16, 2016 ● March 17, 2017 <p>In addition, the district must participate in the PBIS Disproportionality Workgroup.</p>
Incidents of Restraint	
Summary	<p>The district will continue district-level problem solving and additional action planning in regard to incidents of restraint which include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increasing accountability for data-driven problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Incorporate classroom removal data in district-level data reviews and problem-solving – Develop and monitor district CEIS Plan and identified school plans using an eight-step problem-solving process – Develop CEIS self-monitoring protocol and incorporate into school self-monitoring visits – Provide updated CEIS data to district- and school-level stakeholders – Develop and submit school-based CEIS and discipline plans to the superintendent ● Refinement of policies and procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clarify roles – Align implementation – Monitor implementation
Recommendations	The district will continue to collaborate with the SST and district staff to implement problem solving strategies and monitor progress.

Next Steps	
Required Actions	<p>The district must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review restraint data on a monthly basis and engage in data-based problem solving to decrease incidents of restraint. <p>Provide the restraint data reviews and the summary of the problem solving to the district's BEESS liaison on the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 30, 2016 (July 1- August 31) • December 16, 2016 (September 1- November 30) • March 17, 2017 (December 1- February 28) <p>In addition, if the 2016-17 first-quarter restraint data indicate an increase of 25 percent or more, compared to the 2015-16 first-quarter restraint data, the SST may require that the district participate in the PBIS Restraint Workgroup.</p>
Educational Environment (LRE)	
Summary	The district's 2014-15 LRE rate of 72.4 percent was not addressed during the 2015-16 on-site monitoring visit. Subsequent to the on-site visit, BEESS received LRE data for 2015-16 that indicated the district's LRE rate was 74.7 percent, which exceeded the state rate of 73.0 percent.
Recommendations	Continue to implement the BPIE action plan and monitor progress with LRE.
Required Actions	N/A
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process	
Summary	By January 20, 2017 , the SST, ESE director and designated district staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the school district's action plan and determine additional next steps, as appropriate, via a scheduled telephone call. The district will provide documentation to be discussed to the district's BEESS liaison prior to the scheduled call.

Technical Assistance

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

State Support Team for Indian River County School District

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

325 West Gaines Street
Suite 614, Turlington Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
850-245-0475
<http://www.fldoe.org/ese>

David Wheeler
School Psychology Consultant
Student Support Services
wheeler@usf.edu

Cathy Howard-Williams
Program Specialist
DRM

Liz Conn
Program Director
DRM

Laurie Epps
Program Specialist
Instructional Support Services

BEESS Discretionary Projects

Jayna Jenkins
Facilitator
PS:Rtl
jayna@usf.edu

Robyn Vanover
Technical Assistance Specialist
PBIS
robynvanover@usf.edu

Eileen Orr
Project Manager
SEDNET
eileen.orr@stlucieschools.org

Bill Pearlman
Facilitator
FIN
bpearlman@contactfin.com

Sandy Akre
Director
FDLRS: Galaxy
sandra.akre@stlucieschools.org

Rosie Portera Vaughn
Clinical Support Specialist
Florida Atlantic University CARD
vaughnr@fau.edu

Heidi Hyche
Director
Keiser University Multidisciplinary Center
hhyche@keiseruniversity.edu



Pam Stewart, Commissioner
3132171