2017-18 Exceptional Student Education On-Site Monitoring Report

Taylor County School District January 30-February 1, 2018



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 BEESS website: http://www.fldoe.org/ese/

Email: BRIC@fldoe.org Telephone: 850-245-0475

Fax: 850-245-0987



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Authority

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

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

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

Section 1003.573, F.S., Use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities, establishes documentation, reporting and monitoring requirements for districts regarding the use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities. It also requires districts to have policies and procedures in place that govern parent notification, incident reporting, data collection and monitoring the use of restraint or seclusion for students with disabilities. As required, 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 On-Site Monitoring Process

Background Information

The 2017-18 ESE On-Site Monitoring process focuses on those State Performance Plan indicators that contributed to the targeting of school districts for CEIS and the following indicators that affect equity and access in the educational environment for students with disabilities:

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

- Indicator 2 Dropout: Percentage of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.
- Indicator 4 Rates of suspension and expulsion:
 - A. Percentage of districts that have a significant discrepancy in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of more than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs.
 - B. Percentage of districts that have (a) a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of more than 10 days for children with IEPs; and (b) policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and support, and procedural safeguards.
- Indicator 5 Educational environments:

Percentage of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21:

- A. In the regular class 80 percent or more of the day;
- B. In the regular class less than 40 percent of the day; and
- C. In separate schools, residential facilities or homebound/hospital placements.
- Indicator 10 Disproportionality, specific disability categories: Percentage of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.
- CEIS Services provided to students in kindergarten through Grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through Grade 3) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment.
- Restraint Rate of incidents of restraint, as reported on the FDOE website.
- Seclusion Rate of incidents of seclusion, as reported on the FDOE website.

The ESE On-Site Monitoring process includes four phases:

- Phase 1 is composed of planning activities that occur in advance of the initial on-site visit to the school district.
- Phase 2 is the initial on-site visit to the selected school district by the state support team (SST).
- Phase 3 is follow-up 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 how the district is addressing each of the focus areas, and should include participation of the action-planning and problem-solving process team.

In a letter dated August 3, 2017, the superintendent of the Taylor County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: graduation rate, dropout rate and least restrictive environment (LRE).

School Selection

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

- Taylor County Elementary School
- Taylor County Middle School
- Taylor County High School
- Taylor Accelerated School (alternative school)

On-Site Activities

On-Site Visit Team

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

FDOE, BEESS

- Jacob Oliva, Executive Vice Chancellor, K-12 Public Schools
- Monica Verra-Tirado, State Director for Special Education, Bureau Chief
- Wendy Metty, Transition and Graduation, Instructional Student Support
- Bethany Mathers, Program Analyst, Portal to Exceptional Education Resources/Medicaid Tracking System (PEER/MTS), Student Support Services
- Aimee Kowalczyk, Program Specialist, Bureau Resource and Information Center (BRIC)
- Margaret Reilly, Program Specialist, BRIC

Peer Monitor

Leah Harrell, ESE Director, Suwannee County School District

FDOE, BEESS Discretionary Projects

- Tury Lewis, Regional Representative, Project 10: Transition Education Network (Project 10)
- Danielle Roberts-Dahm, Co-Director, Project 10
- Beth Hardcastle, North Regional Coordinator, Problem Solving: Response to Intervention (PS:Rtl)
- Dana Huggins, Resource Coordinator, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Eydie Tricquet, Director, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Associate Center, Miccosukee (FDLRS)
- Robin Petrick, Facilitator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
- Meghan Everett, Executive Director, FIN
- Rebecca Webster, Technical Assistance Specialist, Florida Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports Project: Multi-Tiered System of Support (FLPBIS:MTSS)
- Greg Gillman, Check & Connect Facilitator, State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)
- Alice Schmitges, Program Specialist, Institute for Small and Rural Districts (ISRD)

Data Collection

On-site monitoring activities included the following:

- Review of recent data
- Welcome session with district and school administrators and staff 31 participants
- Administrator focus groups 17 participants
- Teacher focus groups 26 participants
- Parent focus group three participants
- Student focus groups 25 participants
- School walk-through debriefings 24 classrooms
- Action-planning and problem-solving process 28 participants

The district's Best Practices for Inclusive Education dated June 29, 2017, and revised on October 4, 2017, resulted in the following goals being developed:

Goal 1: The district will provide professional development and technical assistance in the use of data analysis to develop and evaluate effectiveness of a multi-tiered instructional and behavior support process to increase the academic performance of students with disabilities by two percent by October 2018.

Goal 2: Goal 2: The district will continue to use inclusive best practices and supports, including inclusive scheduling, collaborative teaching and inclusive delivery models to decrease separate class placement from 18 to 16 percent by October 2018.

2017-18 ESE On-Site Monitoring Results

The following data are related to the focus areas and activities for the 2017-18 ESE On-Site Monitoring for the Taylor County School District.

Graduation Rate

The federal uniform high school graduation rate for students with disabilities is calculated by taking the number of first-time ninth graders from four years ago, plus the number of incoming transfer students on the same schedule to graduate, minus the number of students from this population who transferred out or left to enroll in a private school or home education, divided by the number of standard diplomas from the same group. The district's federal graduation rate for students with disabilities decreased from 43.3 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 33.3 percent during the 2015-16 school year. The 2016-17 graduation rate increased to 43.5 percent, which is below the state target of 60.3 percent.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Taylor	43.3%	33.3%	43.5%
State Target	56.3%	58.3%	60.3%

Dropout Rate

The federal dropout rate for students with disabilities is calculated by taking the number of students who exited special education as a result of dropping out, divided by the number of students who graduated with a regular high school diploma, special diploma, certificate of completion, special certificate of completion, dropped out or died. The district's federal dropout rate for students with disabilities increased from 7.70 percent during the 2014-15 school year to 16.0 percent during the 2015-16 school year. Subsequent to the on-site visit, dropout data for the 2016-17 school year was received and the district's rate decreased to 0.0 percent, which is below the state target of 11.7 percent. The data reported 18 students with disabilities were in the cohort and zero dropped out, which was confirmed while onsite.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Taylor	7.70%	16.0%	0.0%
State Target	15.1%	13.4%	11.7%

Educational Environment (Least Restrictive Environment)

To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are to be educated with students without disabilities. 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 percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class increased from 78.0 percent during the 2015-16 school year to 78.7 percent during the 2016-17 school year. The 2017-18 LRE rate increased to 80.0 percent, which is below the state target of 83.0 percent.

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Taylor	78.0%	78.7%	80.0%
State Target	79.0%	82.0%	83.0%

Interviews Conducted

Administrator Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with administrators from Taylor County Elementary School, Taylor County Middle School, Taylor County High School and Taylor Accelerated School regarding graduation, dropout and LRE.

Themes that emerged from these focus groups included the following:

- Administrators are strongly supportive of inclusion.
- There is much support of district leadership and optimism for the future.
- Services are data driven and student focused.
- At some schools, early warning systems (EWS) are used to identify students in need of assistance and support; however, continued professional development in the use of an EWS is needed for supporting all cohorts, specifically Grades 9-12.
- There is a desire for greater community support of education.
- Overage students are a result of retention, which begins in elementary school.

Teacher Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with teachers from Taylor County Elementary School, Taylor County Middle School, Taylor County High School and Taylor Accelerated School regarding graduation, dropout and LRE.

Themes that emerged from these focus groups included the following:

- Teachers are open to and supportive of inclusive education.
- Teachers are informed about IEP accommodations and their responsibility in implementing the IEP.
- General education teachers feel supported by ESE teachers in assisting students with disabilities.
- There are many opportunities for teachers to gain professional development in areas such as differentiated instruction and other instructional strategies that lead to student success.
- Staff and resources were increased in order to provide more support to ESE students.
- There is a willingness to embrace change in the interest of students.
- In some schools, there is a need for greater knowledge about access points, specifically how they work and how to incorporate them in inclusive settings.
- Prioritizing students with disabilities during scheduling is a challenge in increasing inclusion.

Parent Focus Group

Members of the SST conducted a focus group with parents of students with disabilities aged 14 years or older.

Themes that emerged from the focus group included the following:

- There have been improvements in ESE programs over the years.
- Parents are pleased with the increase in inclusive settings.
- Parents have a person at school who is attentive to their child's needs and is knowledgeable about ESE.
- There is a need for more consistency regarding inclusion throughout the elementary, middle and high schools.
- More information about post-secondary transition is needed beginning when students turn age 14.
- There are concerns about a lack of strategies that would eliminate the need for retention and prevent overage students.
- Parents feel that not all teachers are implementing IEPs and accommodations with fidelity.

Student Focus Groups

Members of the SST conducted focus groups with students from Taylor County Middle School, Taylor County High School and Taylor Accelerated School. Students were asked to share their perspectives on topics such as graduation, dropout and post-school activities.

Comments from these focus groups included the following:

- The importance of receiving a standard diploma and graduating is recognized by the students.
- Some students have employment goals.
- There is at least one adult at school that the students can go to for help.
- The majority of teachers do provide the accommodations on students' IEPs.
- Most teachers are kind, helpful, patient, attentive, respectful and flexible.
- There are concerns about the new school start time and tardy policies and procedures.
- There are concerns about the pace of core classes, such as geometry and history, which

are too fast at times.

- Some students are not aware of opportunities after high school.
- Some students are unaware of their disability and how to self-advocate.
- Some students have a fear of asking for help because of previous negative feedback from certain teachers.
- There is a need for additional tutoring at times during the school year.
- Students want to know the requirements for graduation.
- Students at the alternative school feel supported and understand the benefits of the smaller setting; however, online classes do not provide the "live" teacher support that is needed.
- Students at the alternative school would like more field trips and a career day, which would enhance their post-school planning.
- Students at the alternative school accept ownership for their behaviors that impact their education.
- Students at the alternative school know about Taylor Technical Institute; however, they are
 unsure of how to get into the school with their current academic standing.
- Students at the alternative school feel that they benefit from the ability to catch up with credits; however, they miss the benefits of being at a typical high school, such as extracurricular activities and various opportunities for social interactions.

School Walk-Through Debriefings

School walk-through debriefings were conducted at Taylor County Elementary School, Taylor County Middle School, Taylor County High School and Taylor Accelerated School regarding student engagement, school climate, and evidence of academic and behavioral expectations.

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

- The use of technology to support learning was observed at many sites.
- The learning environments were well organized and conducive to learning; inclusion was evident.
- Rules were clearly posted.
- The majority of students were deeply engaged in their learning activities.
- The school district message, "Elevate Taylor," a district initiative to increase student achievement, was evident throughout school sites.

Commendations

- 1. The district's federal dropout rate for students with disabilities decreased from 16.0 percent during the 2015-16 school year to 0.0 percent for the 2016-17 school year, which is below the state target of 11.7 percent.
- The district assembled a range of stakeholders, including the superintendent, to participate
 in the problem-solving activity during the on-site visit. In addition, participants were
 encouraged by leadership to engage in open and honest discussions.
- 3. District staff, administrators and teachers exhibited a growth mindset and were observed to be student focused and continuously looking for ways to improve instruction, engagement and motivation.

2017-18 Next Steps

Graduation Rate		
Summary	The graduation rate for students with disabilities for the 2015-16 school year was 33.3 percent, which is below the state target of 58.3 percent. For the 2016-17 school year, the graduation rate increased to 43.5 percent, which is below the state target of 60.3 percent.	
Recommendations	The district should ensure that teachers and administrators are aware of the professional development and the online training the discretionary projects offer educators to support positive student outcomes, including graduation.	
Required Actions	The district must continue collaboration with Project 10 staff to provide professional development on the early warning color-coded system to all applicable high school staff, district ESE specialists, the MTSS Core Team and graduation coach who serve the high school and alternative school. Following the training, each school must identify which staff member will be the designee for the implementation process at each school.	
	 The following documentation must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org as evidence of implementation of the required trainings and the school designee by August 15, 2018: A copy of the materials used in the trainings. A copy of the sign-in sheets for each training, which includes participants' names, titles and school names. The name and title of each school-level designee who will be responsible for overseeing the early warning color-coding system. 	
	 The district must develop interventions and activities for students at risk of not graduating and provide documentation of the following: A list of interventions and activities for students at risk of not graduating The name and title of the school-level designee who will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate interventions and activities are made available to students. 	
	This documentation must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by the following dates: June 27, 2018 August 15, 2018 September 12, 2018 	
Dropout Rate		
Summary	The dropout rate for students with disabilities for the 2015-16 school year was 16.0 percent, which is above the state target of 13.4 percent. For the 2016-17 school year, the dropout rate decreased to 0.0 percent, which is below the state target of 11.7 percent.	

Recommendations	It is recommended that the district continue to collaborate with PS:Rtl, SPDG and Project 10 to implement strategies to sustain the dropout rate for students with disabilities.	
Required Actions	None.	
Educational Enviror	nment (Least Restrictive Environment)	
Summary	The district's percentage of students with disabilities being served in the regular class increased from 78.0 percent during the 2015-16 school year to 78.7 percent during the 2016-17 school year. The 2017-18 LRE rate increased to 80.0 percent, which is below the state target of 83.0 percent.	
Recommendations	The district should continue to monitor and track data through problem solving with the district leadership team. It is also recommended that the district review FDOE's technical assistance paper, DPS: 2016-13, entitled, "Least Restrictive Environment Considerations Related to Individual Educational Plans," which can be accessed at https://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7540/dps-201613.pdf .	
	The district should provide opportunities for professional development and technical assistance in the use of data analysis to develop and evaluate effectiveness of a multi-tiered instructional and behavior support process.	
	The district should continue to use inclusive best practices and supports to decrease separate class placement.	
	In order to integrate IEP goals and objectives with the Florida standards in general education environments, the district should provide professional development and technical assistance in current inclusive instructional practices to all schools.	
Required Actions	The district must review its LRE data by June 27, 2018 , and explore options for educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom with sufficient supports in place.	
	In addition, the district must provide professional development by August 15, 2018 , for teachers and administrators that includes flexible and inclusive scheduling at the elementary, middle and high school levels through FIN. The training should focus on how students' learning needs can be met in the general education classroom.	
	 The following documentation must be provided to the district's BEESS liaison via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org: A detailed narrative of the LRE data review and the options discussed and determined as needed for educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom must be provided by October 17, 2018. Evidence of the professional development should include a list of attendees, dates of training and training materials for each training. This documentation must be provided by October 17, 2018. 	

Phase 4 of the ESE Monitoring Process		
Summary	The Taylor County School District was selected for an on-site visit for the following focus areas related to students with disabilities: • Graduation rate • Dropout rate • LRE	
Required Actions	By November 8, 2018 , designated BEESS staff and members of the district problem-solving team will reconvene via a conference call to share how the district is addressing each of the above-mentioned focus areas and determine next steps. The district will coordinate with BEESS regarding the date and time of the conference call and provide documentation (e.g., recent data, professional development, problem-solving notes and action plans) via BEESSMonitoring@fldoe.org by October 17, 2018 .	

Technical Assistance

- Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for Behavior: Recommended Practices for School and District Leaders (FLPBIS:MTSS) may be accessed at https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/pbisresources/RTIB Guide 101811 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.
- The district's SP&P document provides district- and school-based standards for documenting, reporting and monitoring the use of manual, physical, or mechanical restraint and seclusion developed by FDOE. The school district's document for the 2015-16 through 2017-18 school years may be accessed at http://beess.fcim.org/sppDistrictDocSearch.aspx.
- FDOE's technical assistance paper DPS: 2016-13, entitled, "Least Restrictive Environment Considerations Related to Individual Educational Plans," dated January 15, 2016, may be accessed at https://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7540/dps-201613.pdf. This document provides guidance on the provision of services for students with disabilities in the LRE.
- 4. The United States Department of Education, in collaboration with the United States Department of Justice, released School Discipline Guidance in 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 following resource documents 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, which draws from emerging research and best practices;
 - Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources, which indexes federal technical assistance and other resources; and
 - Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations, which catalogs state laws and regulations related to school discipline.
- 5. The Project 10: Transition Education Network may be accessed at http://project10.info. Project 10 assists Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and post-school outcomes. Project 10 serves as the primary conduit between BEESS and school-district personnel in addressing law and policy, effective practices, and research-based interventions in the area of transition services for youth with disabilities. The project also supports transition initiatives developed through the BEESS Strategic Plan. Examples of assistance provided related to graduation rates include using school-level data for graduation success, technical assistance to improve data collection, analysis and data-driven decision making, in order to develop a color-coded student graduation tracking system that can be coordinated with existing initiatives or systems. Regarding dropout, the project supports dropout prevention strategies for students with disabilities, school-based enterprise, service learning and EWS.
- FDLRS Associate Centers Support may be accessed at http://www.fdlrs.org. The 19
 FDLRS associate centers provide an array of instructional and technical support services to school districts statewide. The four central functions of each FDLRS center are Child Find,

parent services, human resource development, and professional learning and technology. The centers collaborate with districts, agency and support personnel, communities, families, and educational personnel providing support services for educators, school administrators, parents, and students with disabilities. Examples of professional development related to graduation rates include Florida standards and access points, differentiated instruction, access to the general curriculum, Strategic Instruction Model, behavior/discipline, Standing up for Me, self-advocacy, responsive classroom, and district-specific supports. Professional development related to dropout include differentiated instruction, accommodations, Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, and Success (known as CHAMPS), Tough Kids, discipline in the secondary classroom, support for parent involvement, Professional Development Alternatives for Positive Behavior Support module, universal design for learning, small-group planning and problem solving, disability awareness, and district-specific supports.

- 7. FIN may be accessed at http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/. FIN collaborates with all districts and schools to provide customized services and supports to ensure that students with disabilities have the same educational, social and future opportunities as their peers. In partnership with districts and schools, FIN facilitates implementation of best practices for inclusive education through data-driven, student-focused problem solving across districts and schools. In addition, FIN facilitates implementation of professional development and provides technical assistance and resources to district and school personnel in order to increase knowledge and skills to build and sustain capacity.
- 8. **PS:Rtl Technology** may be accessed at http://www.floridarti.usf.edu/index.html. One function of this project provides support to regional technology coordinators and technology specialists 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.
- 9. **SEDNET** may be accessed at http://www.sednetfl.info/. The 19 regional SEDNET centers assist Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide the necessary mental health and academic supports to students with or at risk of emotional and behavioral disabilities to prepare students to achieve academic success; graduate high school; and become college, career and life ready.
- 10. The PS/Rtl Technology and Learning Connections (TLC) may be accessed at http://www.tlc-mtss.com. TLC provides guidelines and resources to support the implementation of universal design for learning. A quarterly newsletter that focuses on technology integration to support the local development of highly effective classrooms for all students may also be accessed. TLC's Winter 2016-17 newsletter focused on math instruction, resources and tools to eliminate barriers and increase achievement for all students and can be viewed at http://conta.cc/2kjsuGt. To sign up to receive this quarterly newsletter, go to http://bit.ly/1TLoHLQ. Additional resources are available at http://www.tlc-mtss.com/resources.html.

State Support Team for Taylor 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

Jacob Oliva
Executive Vice Chancellor
K-12 Public Schools
Jacob.Oliva@fldoe.org

Monica Verra-Tirado Bureau Chief Monica.Verra-Tirado@fldoe.org

Wendy Metty Secondary Transition Specialist Instructional Student Support Wendy.Metty@fldoe.org

Bethany Mathers
PEER/MTS
Student Support Services
Bethany.Mathers@fldoe.org

Aimee Kowalczyk
Parent Services
BRIC

Aimee.Kowalczyk@fldoe.org

Margaret Reilly Publications BRIC

Margaret.Reilly@fldoe.org

Peer Monitor

Leah Harrell ESE Director Suwannee County School District

BEESS Discretionary Projects

Tury Lewis
Regional Representative
Project 10
tlewis@mail.usf.edu

Danielle Roberts-Dahm Co-Director Project 10 Iroberts@usfsp.edu

Beth Hardcastle Regional Coordinator PS:Rtl hardcast@usf.edu

Dana Huggins
Resource Coordinator
SEDNET
hugginsd@columbiak12.com

Eydie Tricquet
Director
FDLRS
tricquete1@leonschools.net

Robin Petrick Facilitator FIN rpetrick@contactfin.com

Meghan Everett Executive Director FIN

meverett@contactfin.com

Rebecca Webster
Technical Assistant Specialist
FLPBIS:MTSS
rwebster@usf.edu

Greg Gillman
Project Facilitator
SPDG
gillman@mail.usf.edu

Alice Schmitges
Program Specialist
ISRD
schmitgesa@nefec.org

