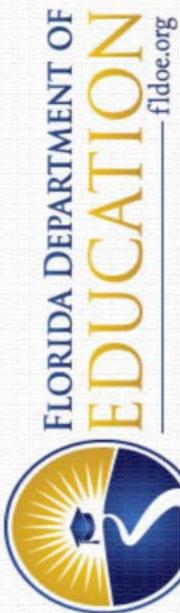


**2014-15 Exceptional Student Education
Monitoring and Assistance
On-Site Visit Report**

**St. Johns County School District
March 10-11, 2015**



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

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August 13, 2015

Dr. Joseph Joyner, Superintendent
St. Johns County School District
40 Orange Street
St. Augustine, Florida 32084-3693

Dear Superintendent Joyner:

We are pleased to provide you with the 2014-15 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Report for St. Johns County School District. The 2014-15 monitoring process focused on reviewing progress for the action plan developed during the 2013-14 on-site visit as well as newly identified targeted areas. The Bureau of Exceptional Education (BEESS) is committed to providing intensive supports for districts selected during the 2013-14 school year for three years of progress monitoring, of which your district was one.

The St. Johns County School District was selected as needing intensive supports for coordinated early intervening services related to discipline, incidents of restraint and discipline (4B). The on-site visit was conducted by a State Support Team (SST) that included BEESS staff, other Florida Department of Education staff and discretionary project staff.

Multiple sources of information were integrated to develop this report including analyzing recent data and evaluating the effectiveness of the district's action plan. In addition, if determined necessary, district and school personnel were interviewed, along with classroom walk-through visits and conducting student focus groups. This process focuses on a shift from ESE compliance to outcomes to prepare all students for college and career readiness, which includes: 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.

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

Superintendent Joyner
August 13, 2015
Page Two

Ms. Lisa Bell, Director of ESE, and her staff were very helpful to the SST in preparing for the on-site visit and throughout the 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/ease/mon-home.asp>.

Thank you for your commitment to improving services to exceptional education students in the St. Johns 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

cc: Lisa Bell
George Freeman
Cathy Bishop
Patricia Howell
Cathy Howard-Williams

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St. Johns County School District

March 10-11, 2015

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, the bureau 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 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 CEIS for children in the LEA, particularly, but not exclusively, for children 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 document.

ESE Monitoring and Assistance Process

Background Information

The 2014-15 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 students with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma.
- Indicator 2 – Dropout: Percentage of students 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 students with IEPs.
 - B. Percentage of districts that have (a) a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of more than 10 days for students 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 students 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/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 was composed of planning activities that occurred 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). **This district was visited on March 25-27, 2014.**
- 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. **This report reflects a follow-up to the 2013-14 monitoring visit and identifies a new area of concern (CEIS for discipline).**
- 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 January 23, 2015, the superintendent of the St. Johns County School District was informed that BEESS would be conducting an on-site monitoring visit for the following focus areas: CEIS for discipline, incidents of restraint and discipline (4B).

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 school-level interviews, student focus group, student observation or classroom walk-through visits:

- Gaines Alternative Program
- Palencia Elementary School
- Ketterlinus Elementary School
- St. Augustine High School
- St. Johns Transition Program

On-Site Activities

On-Site Visit Team

The following SST members planned or conducted this monitoring and assistance visit:

FDOE, BEESS

- Monica Verra-Tirado, Chief, BEESS
- Patricia Howell, Director, Monitoring and Compliance
- Anne Bozik, Program Specialist, Emotional Behavioral Disabilities
- Heather Diamond, Coordinator, Student Support Services (SSS)
- Cathy Howard-Williams, Program Specialist, Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM)
- Jayna Jenkins, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Liaison, SSS

FDOE, Bureau Discretionary Projects

- Beth Hardcastle, Regional Coordinator, Florida Problem Solving: Response to Intervention (PS:RtI) Project (Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Facilitator)
- Therese Sandomierski, Technical Assistance Specialist, Positive Behavior Support: MTSS (PBS:MTSS)
- Carly Detlefsen, Regional Transition Representative, Project 10: Transition Education Network
- Carl Coalson, Regional Project Manager, Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Amy Lane, Program Administrator, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) North East Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC)
- Stephanie Holmes, Psychologist, FDLRS University of Florida – Jacksonville
- Elizabeth Scanlan, Coordinator, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) East Region
- Jeannie Bowles, Division Administrator, Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), University of Florida, College of Medicine – Jacksonville, Division of Developmental Pediatrics
- Elise Summa, Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Clinician, CARD

Data Collection

On-site monitoring and assistance activities included the following:

- Review of recent data
- School-level administrator interviews - 11 participants
- Teacher interviews - eight participants
- Classroom walk-through visits - five classrooms
- Student focus group - four participants
- Action-planning process - 17 participants

Status Updates on the 2013-14 On-Site Visit

The following information is excerpted from the 2013-14 on-site monitoring report. Additional information has been added in bold to update the status of the recommendations and required actions.

Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-Site Visit	
Incidents of Restraint	
Summary:	Based on 2013-14 school year data, the district's number of restraint incidents is almost five times higher than the average of other size-alike districts. The number of students being restrained is over 2.25 times higher than other size-alike districts.
Required Actions:	<p>By February 2, 2015, the school district shall inform the bureau regarding the status of the collaborations with each of the following discretionary projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district shall collaborate with PBS:MTSS in order to build the school district's capacity to better assist schools to develop effective discipline, social skills teaching and behavior support strategies for all students. • The district shall continue to collaborate with SEDNET regarding facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and students with an Emotional Behavior Disability (EBD) and their families. • The district shall collaborate with the CARD and Partnership for Effective Programs for Students with Autism Teacher Partnership and FDLRS to provide professional development for teachers of students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The professional development should include: analysis of functions of severe problem behavior and strategies for providing support for the students. <p>By February 2, 2015, the district is to provide the bureau with an update on the progress due to implementation of the actions determined at the problem-solving sessions.</p>
Status Update 2013-14 Monitoring Visit:	The St. Johns County School District provided the following update information regarding collaboration with discretionary projects following the 2013-14 on-site visit related to incidents of restraint:

Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-Site Visit

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PBS:MTSS – As of March 9, 2015, there were 11 PBS schools in the district. Various trainings have been provided to the non-PBS schools (Leader in Me, Capturing Kids Hearts, Project Wisdom and Character Counts). MTSS problem-solving teams review discipline data at Core Team meetings and determine which students need additional support. • SEDNET – The district has moved from Professional Crisis Management (PCM) to Crisis Prevention Institute’s Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (CPI) as the district-approved crisis management program. The only school that maintains certification in PCM (as well as CPI) is the St John’s Transition Program. Consistent district support (mental health counselors, behavior specialists) has been provided to most of the elementary and middle schools, with increasing support at the newest elementary behavior unit located at Palencia Elementary School. CPI booster sessions are being provided to schools with newly-trained teams. A behavior specialist has been trained to provide quality feedback to schools regarding restraint reports entered into the FDOE’s web-based reporting system. Monthly cumulative reports are sent to each school where restraint incidents have occurred. • CARD and Partnership for Effective Programs for Students (PEPSA) and FDLRS – The district’s goal was to provide professional development for teachers of students with an ASD (analysis of functions of severe problem behavior and strategies for providing support for the students). CARD provided training for the district’s behavior units as well as ASD Awareness training for general education staff. In addition, staff members from St. Johns County School District have attended PEPSA trainings to learn about resources and strategies. FDLRS was instrumental in assisting the district to switch from PCM to CPI as the district-approved crisis management system. FDLRS also assisted with paraprofessional training and training related to the Picture Exchange Communication System and developing quality IEPs.
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Discipline (4B)

Summary:	<p>Black students with disabilities in the district are more likely to be suspended or expelled as compared to all nondisabled students. Below are risk ratios that far exceed the state limit of 3.0.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2012-13 school year – 9.35 risk ratio • As of October 31, 2013 – 12.90 risk ratio • As of January 27, 2014 – 11.74 risk ratio
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Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-Site Visit	
Required Actions:	<p>By February 2, 2015, the school district shall inform the bureau regarding the status of the collaborations with each of the following discretionary projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district shall collaborate with PBS:MTSS in order to build the school district's capacity to better assist schools to develop effective discipline, social skills teaching and behavior support strategies for all students. • The district shall continue to collaborate with SEDNET regarding facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and students with an EBD and their families. <p>By February 2, 2015, the district is to provide the bureau with an update on the progress due to implementation of the actions determined at the problem-solving sessions.</p>
Status Update 2013-14 Monitoring Visit:	<p>The St. Johns County School District provided the following update information regarding collaboration with discretionary projects following the 2013-14 on-site visit related to discipline (4B):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PBS:MTSS – As of March 9, 2015, there were 11 PBS schools in the district. Various trainings have been provided to the non-PBS schools (Leader in Me, Capturing Kids Hearts, Project Wisdom and Character Counts). MTSS problem-solving teams review discipline data at Core Team meetings and determine which students need additional support. • SEDNET has provided a grant that will assist staff volunteers to become Registered Behavior Technicians through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. The regional project manager has worked with the district to provide a regular review of the “4B students” from the 2013-14 school year. As of March 9, 2015, none of those students had received more than 10 days of Out-of-School Suspension (OSS). The district has initiated a requirement that schools must contact the office of the Deputy Superintendent for Operations to review each OSS for students with disabilities who have accumulated five days of OSS. When a student with a disability received five days of In-School Suspension (ISS) or OSS, a district behavior specialist completes a review and makes recommendations to the school. A monthly cumulative report of ISS and OSS is forwarded to each school with incidents of ISS or OSS.
Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process	
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Next Steps from the 2013-14 On-Site Visit	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By March 30, 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.
Status Update 2013-14 Monitoring Visit:	Since the 2013-14 on-site visit, the district had revised the action plan as determined to be necessary based upon implementation and review of updated data.

2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit Results

The following data is related to the focus areas and activities for the 2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance On-Site Visit for the St. Johns County School district.

CEIS – Discipline

Districts are required to set aside 15 percent of IDEA, Part B funds for coordinated early intervening services if **any** of the following criteria are met:

- Students of a particular race are at least 3.5 times more likely to be identified as disabled when compared to all other races combined. The calculation is repeated for students with disabilities, students identified with an intellectually disability, students with an emotional or behavioral disability, students with a specific learning disability, students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, students identified as other health impaired, and students identified as speech or language impaired.
- Students with disabilities ages six through 21 of any race are at least 3.5 times more likely to be placed in a separate class or other separate environment when compared to all other races combined. The calculation is used only for the total of all students with disabilities.
- Incidents of removal of students with disabilities through ISS, 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 calculation is used only for the total of all students with disabilities.

St. Johns County was required to set aside these funds during the 2014-15 school year due to incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through ISS, OSS, or expulsion for students with disabilities occurring at a rate that was 3.68 times greater than to all other races combined. The calculation was based on 2012-13 discipline data.

The CEIS calculation for discipline is different from the calculation for SPP Indicators 4A and 4B. Indicator 4 calculations are based on the **number of students** with disabilities being removed for more than 10 days due to OSS or expulsion compared to their nondisabled peers. The CEIS Discipline calculation is based on the **number of incidents**, including ISS, OSS and expulsion and only looks at students with disabilities.

The 15 percent of the IDEA Part B funds was to be used for students who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who are receiving additional behavioral supports in order to succeed in the general education curriculum. During 2015-16, the district will not be required to set aside 15 percent as the district's risk ratio is **3.11** based on 2013-14 discipline data.

School year when funds are required to be withheld	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Risk Ratio (Based on 2 year lag data)	4.15	*	*	*	*	3.68	*

*Signifies a risk ratio less than 3.5

The district reported that the following actions were supported with CEIS funds during the 2014-15 school year:

- District psychologists meet with MTSS school-based leadership teams to assist with appropriate interventions for struggling students, coach teachers of implementation on interventions and assist in the collection and use of data to drive instruction.
- Materials were purchased for training of staff to work with nondisabled students in de-escalation techniques and behavioral strategies in an effort to prevent behavior problems resulting in suspension or expulsion.

Incidents of Restraint

The following data shows the increase in the number of incidents of restraint in the district since the 2012-13 school year to the 2014-15 school year.

2012- 13		2013-14		2014- 15	
Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students	Number of Incidents	Number of Students
305	119	543	116	623	121

When comparing St. Johns County to its size-alike districts, St. Johns County has the highest number of incidents of restraint involving the largest number of students.

Comparison of Size-Alike Districts for Restraints			
School Year	District	Number of Incidents	Number of Students
2014-15	St. Johns	623	121
	Alachua	60	27
	Bay	69	49
	Clay	270	100
	Hernando	19	14
	Leon	84	39
	Okaloosa	68	41
	Santa Rosa	42	44
	St. Lucie	183	77

Source: FDOE – Restraint Data Reported from Districts

The following information was reported by the district regarding activities in place to **reduce** the number of incidents of restraint:

- One of the district's behavior specialists is also a certified CPI instructor who provides annual booster training to individual crisis teams at each school. During the training, staff questions were answered and skills were reviewed. A follow-up email is provided to record reminders for the team.
- School crisis teams are encouraged to meet approximately once per month to review incidents of restraint, discuss strategies to reduce the future need for restraint and practice skills. Annually, school crisis teams share the definition of a crisis that may require restraint during an all-staff meeting. These teams also explain how assistance is obtained. Meeting documentation from the schools is shared with the district office.
- Each draft report for an incident of restraint is reviewed by district staff, and feedback is provided to the school.
- Each quarter schools complete a fidelity check to verify compliance for the crisis teams as well as compliance related to individual incidents of restraint.
- Each behavior unit has the support of a district mental health counselor at least once per week. Two behavior units (the newest behavior unit and one of the middle school units) receive this support three days per week. St. Augustine High School receives this support four days per week, and the Transition Program receives the support five days per week.
- Each behavior unit has the support of a district behavior specialist at least once per week. The newest behavior unit has this support three days per week. Support includes consultation as well as modeling for staff regarding the behavior change process.
- The district sponsored a full-day training by Melisa Genaux: "Effective Behavior Management for the Classroom." Representatives from all of the behavior units participated in the training. Additional training was provided for behavior unit schools to develop a positive focus for the 2014-15 school year. Changes included the following: positive target behaviors (one or two) on daily point sheets, point sheets reviewed several times throughout the school day, user-friendly improvements to the level system with opportunities for the general education experience, and simplified classroom rules posted in classrooms with accompanying visuals.
- Ketterlinus Elementary School implemented an extensive professional development plan. This unit has become a model behavior unit through implementation of the positive training that staff members received. During the 2014-15 school year, they invited staff members from the other (newer) elementary behavior unit to their trainings and have fostered a mentoring relationship between the unit staff members.
- The district increased supports to Palencia Elementary School, the newer elementary behavior unit, following an increase in the number of incidents of restraint during September, October and November 2014. The district behavior specialist increased time with this unit to two to three days per week, and the district mental health counselor increased services to three days per week with this unit. The number of incidents of restraint decreased significantly during the next quarter, in spite of the teacher's moving.
- Plans were discussed for SEDNET to provide materials for the de-escalation room at Ketterlinus Elementary School.

The district provided the following updates for the activities related to restraint on the action plan developed in conjunction with the 2013-14 on-site monitoring and assistance process which included the following:

Activities on the district's action plan from the 2013-14 on-site visit	March 2015 Updates
Reevaluate size-alike comparison data using more specific data, such as overall ESE enrollment and enrollment by disability type.	The district decided not to pursue comparison data with size-alike districts.
Explore the Value-Added Model (VAM) scores in behavior units. Qualified teachers may be reluctant to work in behavior units due to lower evaluations.	The district decided not to pursue an exploration into VAM scores.
Obtain a random sampling of restraint incident reports to develop a form similar to the de-escalation interview form to identify student triggers and critical components of PCM.	The de-escalation form already existed and was requested to be completed with each student in each behavior unit. Responses from the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years were combined into a De-escalation Report Summary (with the goal to look for themes). The district created a De-escalation Guide to serve as a resource and as a backdrop for training staff. The goal for the 2015-16 school year is to present the guide to behavior unit staff and to encourage behavior unit staff to use the interview to inform behavior plans and to create visual prompts for student desks.
An established "pool" of qualified and effective substitute teachers for Ketterlinus Elementary School might qualify as a pilot project for the state. Survey all behavior teachers about the average, mean, mode, range for behavior teachers' length of service in that role. Conduct pre-and post-employment satisfaction surveys for St. Johns County School District behavior teachers. Propose the idea to SEDNET to see if grant funding might be available to support such a project.	Staffing issues from the 2013-14 school year have not been a problem during the 2014-15 school year. The Ketterlinus Elementary School behavior unit shared names of their "pool" of substitute teachers with the new Palencia Elementary School behavior unit. All teachers have indicated the desire to return to the behavior unit for the 2015-16 school year.
Early hiring for behavior unit staff should result in a qualified pool of applicants for the behavior unit. Check with the district's Human Resources office for deadlines and requirements. Finding qualified full-time staff should help reduce turnover.	Ketterlinus Elementary School hired two new teachers during the summer before the 2014-15 school year.

Activities on the district's action plan from the 2013-14 on-site visit	March 2015 Updates
Use "At-Risk" funds for Full-Time Equivalent student enrollment funding for behavior units at Ketterlinus Elementary School. Having someone to support staff with paperwork requirements may increase teacher motivation or make their positions more appealing for qualified applicants.	Ketterlinus Elementary School hired a school counselor dedicated solely to the behavior unit.
Explore the idea of monthly Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions for behavior unit staff to provide opportunities for collaboration and support and self-assessment.	During the 2014-15 school year the entire district switched from PCM to CPI, requiring all behavior unit staff to attend two days of training. Plans for the 2015-16 school year are to implement a monthly 30-minute virtual PLC for behavior units.
Explore training for Ketterlinus Elementary School staff covering strategies for students with ASD.	Ongoing support is provided by district behavior specialists and the ESE program specialist for ASD.
Talk with the principal of Ketterlinus Elementary School regarding becoming a "PBS school."	Ketterlinus Elementary School noted that any significant difficulties were localized to the behavior unit. The school elected not to pursue becoming a PBS school during the 2014-15 school year and will consider doing so for 2015-16.

- The district updated its action plan for incidents of restraint to include the following:
 - *Problem Identification Statement:* The district's number of restraint incidents is almost five times higher than the average of other size-alike districts in the state, and the number of students involved is over two-and-a-half times higher than other size-alike districts.)
 - *Desired Outcome:* Decrease the number of staff and student behaviors resulting in restraint in higher-need schools
 - *How It Will Be Measured:* Number of incidents of restraint per day per month, number of students restrained (unduplicated), percentage of students restrained, range and average duration of restraint per student

Discipline (Indicator 4B)

Below is the risk ratio of black students with disabilities receiving more than 10 days of out-of-school suspension or expulsion compared to nondisabled students.

District	2010-11	2011-13	2012-13	2013-14
St. Johns Risk Ratio	7.463	8.999	9.352	10.988
State Risk Ratio	2.805	2.670	2.495	2.919

In 2013-14, black students with disabilities were **10.988** times more likely than all nondisabled students to be suspended or expelled for 10 cumulative days in a school year. The district's risk ratio has steadily increased each year since 2010-11.

Most of the interventions of the district's action plan were determined by the district to have been implemented with fidelity. However, a decision was made to replace increased data disaggregation with a more direct administrative approach; required review with the Deputy Superintendent for Operations as described in the fourth bullet below.

The following resources are currently being utilized by the district regarding decreasing Indicator 4B data:

- Discipline calculations for risk-ratios for Indicator 4B are completed on a monthly basis.
- Monthly reports of cumulative incidents of ISS and OSS are forwarded to school principals and deans with students highlighted when screening is needed and when OSS days are 11 days or more. District behavior specialists are assigned to students with disabilities for screenings when the student is at five days of OSS or ISS. Screenings include: review of the student's IEP as well as specifics related to the discipline incidents. A report is provided to the school by the district behavior specialist that summarizes the student's suspension patterns and provides recommendations for future support (i.e., changing IEP goals). The schools then consider recommendations and take action, with most responding within 10 business days.
- Monthly risk ratios are shared with the ESE Director and the Deputy Superintendent for Operations.
- All schools are required to review with the Deputy Superintendent for Operations each suspension incident for any student with a disability who has accumulated five days of OSS.
- Progress is reviewed during monthly ESE virtual meetings, principal meetings, assistant principal meetings as well as with discipline staff (through School Services).
- A district behavior specialist has been assigned two days a week to keep track of progress on screening reports and school responses.

Interviews Conducted

Ketterlinus Elementary School

Administrators from Ketterlinus Elementary School were transparent about the difficulties and challenges that arose last year. However, they shared that there were improvements over the past year at the school which included adding an additional classroom unit to provide more support in a smaller group setting. Administrators also stated that participating in trauma-informed care training had increased awareness of the impact of trauma. In addition, administrative staff acknowledged that prone restraint, although not included in CPI crisis management training, is utilized depending upon need. Administrators expressed interest in learning alternate means to address significant behaviors that have resulted in the use of prone restraint.

Staff indicated interest in resources for the following four priorities: professional development for teachers school-wide on de-escalation strategies; the need to improve sustainability of transition to general education environments; the need for a mechanism for tracking training needs and training plans and the need to increase knowledge in how de-escalation strategies

may increase academic attainment. The school's behavior specialist holds a round table discussion with school staff monthly to talk out issues at hand.

Palencia Elementary School

School staff at Palencia Elementary School indicated that the school might not have been prepared as adequately as it could have been for beginning the cluster site. After the high number of restraints, supports were added. Staff indicated that more supports are needed because students are requesting to speak with a counselor more often than the counselor is available on campus.

The staff indicated a need for more de-escalation training and for trauma-informed care training. There is a school-wide behavioral system which is used by the two cluster units as well. At the beginning of the school year restraints increased drastically as there was only one cluster unit. After opening a second cluster unit at the school there was a decrease in the number of restraint incidents. There appears to be strong involvement by school administration as the principal knew students personally. Teams share information with elective teachers for consistency.

St. Augustine High School

Teachers and administrators at the school noted multiple positive interventions, including home visits. They also noted the need for more community engagement. As the school's population has a higher percentage of black students, the principal has made efforts to recruit more teachers of color. Teachers at the school indicated a belief that the behaviors resulting in a high suspension rate were more related to socio-economic issues rather than racial issues. The teachers noted positive proactive district involvement in response to last year's and this year's on-site monitoring and assistance. This is not an active PBS school.

Gaines Alternative Program

Administration discussed the transition activities that occur to assist students to prepare for re-entry into a less restrictive environment. The principal of the school explained how visits to the regular school increase over six weeks and students do not return to their regular schools until they are ready. The SST learned that students can be suspended from this alternative school for infractions.

Student Focus Group

A student focus group was conducted at the Gaines Alternative Program because the St. Augustine High School students who contribute to the district's 2014-15 Indicator 4B data were being served in this program on the day of the on-site visit. Four students with IEPs participated in the focus group interview.

Students were asked questions regarding the following topics: IEP team meetings and student participation, academics, assessment accommodations, suspension and expulsion, dropout and extracurricular activities.

The following information was provided by the students in the focus group:

- All of the students had participated in the IEP team meeting process and indicated that their feedback had been requested during these meetings. Three of the four students stated that they had provided information during IEP team meetings; the fourth student did not provide information.

- Two of the students preferred the individual computer-based instruction provided at the Gaines Alternative Program; the other two students preferred the classroom instruction provided at St. Augustine High School.
- The two students who preferred the instructional style provided at the Gaines Alternative Program also preferred the quieter, calmer atmosphere of this smaller school.
- The Gaines Alternative Program provides core classes without electives.
- One of the four students indicated participation in extracurricular activities at St. Augustine High School.
- One student was aware of at least one of [the student's] testing accommodations. This student also thought [the student] had a behavioral intervention plan and stated that sometimes [the student] can set the goal.
- One student indicated consideration of dropping out of school and stated that the parent had suggested that this student drop out since the student was getting in trouble at school.
- One student is staying in school to get a better job.
- One student participates in the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps program.

A single student observation was conducted at **St. Johns Transition Program** by an SST member who is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst from CARD. The school staff members demonstrated effective use of positives in the classroom as the complexity of the student's needs were challenging. During the observation there was an incident for which prone restraint was used. There were no apparent efforts to de-escalate the situation and the imminent danger was not clear. The student's teacher was not present when the restraint took place.

Additional information provided by the district included the following:

- A community resource that is being developed is a mobile crisis unit for Baker Act situations as well as a strong follow-up for students returning to school after being Baker Acted.
- The Education Prevention Intervention Counseling component for first-time alcohol and drug offenses was referenced as a support within the district.
- Every nurse has the biofeedback program called *Heart Math* and nurses and counselors have been trained in its use to help students relax.
- District staff noted school psychologist involvement in supporting students and staff at all tiers. They are considered the backbone and are in schools every week as part of the school-based PS/RtI team.
- District staff noted Advancement Via Individual Determination schoolwide which is a culturally responsive instruction and that training is provided for teachers. In addition, when there are pockets of poverty in an otherwise affluent school district, there are unique challenges and a need for effective early intervention.
- A middle school visited last year, Murray Middle School, was experiencing huge success.

Commendations

1. The district has implemented a new discipline policy requiring district-level involvement for any cumulative suspensions over five days for students with disabilities, resulting in increased collaboration between the district Student Services staff and the district ESE staff members.
2. There has been an expansion of school-level mental health expertise and teaming. The district is developing collaborative community relationships, including the creation of a

- mobile crisis response team to address Baker Act situations at the school level.
3. There was evidence of using resources well (not letting titles limit roles). At multiple levels throughout the organization, there was cross-function and cross-department cooperation and focus on the best interests of students.
 4. Staff members at the school and district level commented on the positive effects of the district monitoring process.

2014-15 Action-Planning and Problem-Solving Process and Next Steps

As part of the 2014-15 monitoring and assistance on-site visit, the SST members, ESE Director and representatives from the St. Johns County School District participated in a problem-solving session on March 11, 2015.

Next Steps	
CEIS- Discipline	
Summary:	St. Johns County was required to set aside these funds during the 2014-15 school year due to black students with disabilities being 3.68 times more likely to be removed due to ISS, OSS, or expulsion than all other races combined. The calculation was based on 2012-13 discipline data.
Recommendation:	The 2015-16 data for CEIS discipline for the district is 3.11, which is under the bureau's definition of significant disproportionate representation of 3.5. It is recommended that the district continue efforts to decrease the risk ratio.
Required Action:	N/A
Discipline (4B)	
Summary:	In 2013-14, the district's risk ratio was 10.988 for incidents of removal of black students with disabilities through suspension and expulsion for more than 10 days in a school year. The district's risk ratio has steadily increased each year since 2010-11.
Recommendation:	N/A

<p>Required Action:</p>	<p>The district is required to compile and review 4B data quarterly and provide BEESS a summary on the problem-solving activities which resulted from this review. In addition, if the 4B data for the first quarter of the 2015-16 school year shows a substantial increase from the July 2015 baseline 4B data (risk ratio of 6.95), the district may be required to participate in the state-wide PBS Disproportionality Workgroup.</p> <p>Please provide BEESS with the quarterly district data and summary no later than the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 30, 2015 • January 15, 2016 • April 12, 2016 • June 9, 2016
<p>Incidents of Restraint</p>	
<p>Summary:</p>	<p>In the 2014-15 school year, the number of incidents of restraint were 643 for 121 students. The number of restraints has doubled since 2012-13 and the number of restraints is higher than all the size-alike districts.</p>
<p>Recommendation:</p>	<p>The district should participate in advanced training for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on what constitutes imminent danger • CPI training for students with ASD • CPI training in trauma-informed care • Training in verbal de-escalation
<p>Required Action:</p>	<p>The district must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discontinue the use of prone restraint in schools where CPI is the crisis management system utilized • Participate in the state-wide PBS Restraint Workgroup • Conduct a three-year trend study to determine why the number of incidents has doubled since the 2012-13 school year. <p>The district must continue to collaborate with SEDNET regarding facilitating a comprehensive system of care for high-risk students and students with an EBD and their families. Documentation regarding this collaboration must be provided to BEESS through quarterly updates no later than the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 15, 2015 • January 15, 2016 • April 15, 2016 • June 15, 2016

Phases 3 and 4 of the ESE Monitoring and Assistance process

Summary:	By December 31, 2015 , the SST, 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.
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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 2016-17 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
 - **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations** that catalogue state laws and regulations related to school discipline
5. **Functional Behavioral Assessments and Positive Interventions Benchmarks of Effective Practice** (Florida's PBS Project) may be accessed at http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/pbs_FBA_Benchmarks.pdf.
6. **Problem Solving and Response to Intervention State Project (PS:Rtl) Problem Solving and Response to Intervention – 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.

7. **Attendance Works** may be accessed at: www.attendanceworks.org. This is a national and state initiative that promotes better policy and practice around school attendance and promotes tracking chronic absence data for each student beginning in kindergarten, or ideally earlier, and partnering with families and community agencies to intervene when poor attendance is a problem for students or schools. Research conducted by Robert Balfanz and Vaughan Byrnes on analyzing data on chronic absenteeism at the state level is included in this website. In addition, promising practices among cities, school districts and nonprofits to combat chronic absenteeism are highlighted.
8. The **Commissioner's Leadership Academy** provides administrator professional development. Superintendents have been invited to nominate up to two principals and principal supervisors for the year-long, job-embedded professional learning opportunity. The Center for Leadership resources and tools can be accessed at <http://www.k-12leadership.org/tools>.

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

**2014-15 ESE Monitoring and Assistance
State Support Team for St. Johns County School District**

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**Florida Department of Education
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Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

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

ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
BEESS	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
BPIE	Best Practices for Inclusive Education
CARD	Center for Autism and Related Disorders
CEIS	Coordinated early intervening services
CEL	Center for Educational Leadership
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CPI	Crisis Prevention Institute's Nonviolent Crisis Intervention
DRM	Dispute Resolution and Monitoring
EBD	Emotional behavioral disability
ESE	Exceptional student education
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
F.S.	Florida Statutes
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual educational plan
ISS	In-school-suspension
LEA	Local educational agency
MTSS	Multi-tiered system of support
NEFEC	North East Florida Educational Consortium
OSS	Out-of-school suspension
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PCM	Professional Crisis Management
PBS:MTSS	Positive Behavior Support/Multi-tiered System of Supports
PEPSA	Partnership for Effective Programs for Students
PLC	Professional learning community
SEDNET	Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities
SPP	State Performance Plan
SSSP	Student Support Services Project
SST	State Support Team
VAM	Value Added Model



Pam Stewart, Commissioner
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