

**Exceptional Student Education:
Organizational, Program, and
Service Delivery Review**

**Polk County Public Schools
A Report of the External Core Team**



Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative
Education Development Center, Inc.

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Exceptional Student Education: Organizational, Program, and Service Delivery Review

Background

The Polk County Public Schools is the 8th largest school district in the state of Florida and was listed as the 34th largest U.S. school district in 2004–2005. The county continues to experience rapid growth, and student enrollment in the district is expected to soon exceed 100,000 students. The school district reports that 14% of the current enrollment of approximately 92,000 comprises students with disabilities who require special education and/or related services. More students with limited English proficiency are enrolling in the school district, and school district officials estimate that there are as many as 75 languages represented in the student population. The county is diverse in both ethnic makeup and socioeconomics. Half the students in the district qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. This figure is slightly higher than the state average. The median household income of \$41,600 is about \$1,000 lower than the state average. The school district is geographically large and has urban, suburban, and rural characteristics.

The Superintendent has articulated a vision for the school district that is also reflected in a Strategic Plan with measurable goals for student performance. Of concern, however, is the performance of the district's students with disabilities who are receiving special education services. In response to this concern, the Superintendent has initiated an examination of the school district's delivery of special education programs and services to students with disabilities with the intent of improving the educational outcomes of this population. This examination includes a critical review of service delivery and program models as well as an analysis of the organizational structure that is providing leadership, direction, and support to the district's schools and education professionals. The Superintendent is seeking recommendations that will assist the school district in providing education and related services to students with disabilities in a manner that (1) is compliant with federal and state law and regulations, (2) reflects contemporary standards of best practice, and (3) results in increased graduation rates, with an emphasis on these students receiving standard high school diplomas.

Toward this end, the School Board of Polk County entered into a contractual agreement with the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative (the Collaborative) to provide an expert external review of the county's educational services to students with disabilities and the impact of these services, based on current data. The Collaborative, housed at Education Development Center, Inc., in Newton, Massachusetts, is a national network of more than 100 urban school districts committed to improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. In addition to providing leadership development and networking opportunities to its membership of special and general education administrators, the Collaborative offers a range of customized technical assistance and

professional development services that focus on some of the most pressing issues affecting urban school districts; e.g., low achievement of students with disabilities in urban schools, inclusive educational practices, school-wide behavior supports, disproportionate representation of minorities in special education, redesigning organizational structures and service delivery systems to enhance supports to schools.

The Collaborative organized an External Core Team to participate in the Polk County review, comprising the following members:

- Dr. David Riley, Executive Director of the Collaborative. Dr. Riley serves as Team Chair and has more than 25 years of experience working with large, medium, and small urban school districts on a myriad of special education programmatic and compliance issues. As Executive Director of the Collaborative and co-leader of several national centers, he has become intimate with both the research on and best practices in developing inclusive schools, disproportionality, dropout prevention, and culturally responsive pedagogy. For the past 14 years, Dr. Riley has served as Educational Co-Chair of the Summer Institute on Critical Issues in Urban Special Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- Ms. Gayle Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services, District of Columbia Public Schools, Washington, D.C. Ms. Amos led the Baltimore City Schools' Student Support Services Division when that school district confronted many fiscal, leadership, and legal crises. She led the school system's efforts to comply with a number of court-mandated outcomes, including those related to improved data management, parent involvement, timely evaluations, fiscal accountability, alignment of special education instruction with general education standards, and fewer restrictive placements of identified students. She also developed productive partnerships with universities and corporations, and designed systems to improve special education eligibility and monitor service delivery. In her role as Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services for the D.C. Public Schools, Ms. Amos has responsibilities that span special, bilingual, and gifted education.
- Mr. Ronald Felton, Chief Executive Officer, Bertha Abess Children's Center, Miami, Florida, and former Associate Superintendent for Exceptional Student Education (ESE), Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida. Mr. Felton led the Miami-Dade County Public Schools' ESE programs and services for 10 years. During that period, the school district's reputation for developing and supporting inclusive schools and classrooms grew to a national level. He also led the school district to resolution of an Office for Civil Rights complaint regarding the disproportionate representation of African American students in special education; he decentralized related-services personnel to serve schools, students, and families more effectively; he developed policies and procedures to focus more on pre-referral interventions; and he improved general education and special education collaborative initiatives in support of all diverse learners.

(See Appendix A for the resumes of External Core Team members.)

In December 2006, two members of the External Core Team met with the Superintendent, the Associate Superintendent for Learning, and several members of the school district's central office administrative staff in order to (1) gain an understanding of the school district's vision and concerns relative to services for students with disabilities, and (2) identify documents that would assist the team in reviewing the current status of program and service delivery, as well as current administrative and program support structure and strategies. Through these meetings, several critical areas were identified:

- The efficiency and effectiveness of the current organizational structure in ensuring the delivery of services to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.
- Attracting, hiring, and retaining qualified special education teachers and support personnel.
- Dealing with the increasing number of newly hired teachers who lack professional training and/or experience in education.
- The efficacy of the existing ESE regional (area) model for providing support to the schools.
- Strategies for improving graduation rates for students with disabilities, including providing access to the general education curriculum.
- Reducing absences and suspensions of students with disabilities.
- The relationship of the ESE Department to the Student Services Department, and their combined impact on the identification of and provision of services to students with disabilities, as well as those who may be at risk of school failure.
- The accuracy of student data, and its use in informing instructional practice and service delivery.
- Articulating an agenda for school improvement that is inclusive of the needs of *all* students, including those with disabilities.

In January 2007, the External Core Team spent three days onsite interviewing more than 100 Polk County education professionals, parent leaders, and others who could provide insight and perspective on the above areas of concern, as well as recommendations for how outcomes for students with disabilities might be improved. Additionally, Core Team members spoke with a number of Florida State Department of Education (FDOE) professionals and others knowledgeable of the county's educational and other support services to children and youth with disabilities and their families. (See Appendix B for a list of interviewees.) In the past two and a half months, Core Team members also reviewed hundreds of reports, training materials, policies and procedures, staffing plans, program descriptions, organizational charts and role descriptions, state records, and other documents. (See Appendix C for a list of documents reviewed.) The purpose of these activities was to generate recommendations that would assist the school district in its efforts to improve outcomes for students with disabilities who receive special education services.

Findings

Members of the External Core Team believe that the foundation is in place for achieving the Superintendent's vision of improving student achievement throughout Polk County and for all students, including those with disabilities, for these key reasons:

- The central office and school-based personnel we met with share the Superintendent's vision and mission to improve outcomes for all students.
- Data are being organized and presented to central office and school-based personnel with sufficient detail and in a user-friendly form to promote data-based decision making.
- The school district's Strategic Plan has measurable goals, and, unlike many such plans, its existence is well-known and referenced by interviewees.
- There is widespread recognition at the central office and school levels of the administration's vision of implementing instructional programs that are inclusive of students with special needs.
- Although the school district has some schools that exclusively serve students with disabilities (center schools), there is no indication that these schools have been over enrolled.
- There is an initiative underway to revamp the current IAT process with a model that is consistent with a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach to identifying and serving students with special needs.
- The school district has not been weighed down by large numbers of due process and other special education related complaints and/or litigation.

The body of the External Core Team's final report is divided into three sections:

1. Service Delivery
2. Programs
3. Organizational Orientation and Structure

Each section provides a discussion of the Core Team's critical findings and a series of recommendations. In the aggregate, recommendations for service delivery, programmatic, and organizational improvements are far reaching and require a cultural shift in the way in which many Polk County educators currently view students with disabilities, special education, and the supports that students with and without disabilities need in order to succeed. The Core Team appreciates, as should the leadership, staff, and parents of the Polk County Public Schools, that it will take time to make all of the changes these recommendations suggest.

Section 1: Service Delivery

Discussion

Discipline

The school district has invested a considerable amount of resources in providing professional development and supports to schools in order to help principals and their leadership teams implement school-wide behavior management strategies, and to aid classroom teachers in adopting research-based classroom support strategies. A district-wide trainer of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) has been designated, and 25 Polk County professionals have volunteered to serve as school coaches. Approximately 34 schools have implemented various PBIS strategies. Five Academic & Behavior Support Teachers provide support to ESE teachers on classroom management techniques. In addition, the ESE Department has developed an online course on discipline that staff from a majority of schools in the district have completed, and several other professional development initiatives related to discipline issues have been sponsored by various school departments.

At the same time, a significant number of interviewees expressed concern about discipline issues, specifically, that (1) the discipline code is overly punitive for all students, (2) in-house suspensions are, for the most part, no more than “holding tanks” (i.e., they provide no opportunities for students to keep up with lessons), (3) school suspension rates in Polk County are high, particularly for students with disabilities, and (4) discipline data are not being reported accurately by the schools, understating the number of days that students, with or without disabilities, are being suspended. Some interviewees also shared the view that there is a double standard with regard to the treatment of students with disabilities—that these students are “protected” from the discipline code sanctions that would be applied if they were not so identified.

A review of the Code of Discipline indicates that it is not aligned with principles of PBIS, and, in this respect, the school district is undermining its own investment in PBIS training. Additionally, in these days of accountability for Adequate Yearly Progress and the performance of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) subgroups, an overly punitive code of discipline reduces time spent on learning and the likelihood that students will be able to demonstrate content proficiency.

Qualified Teachers

To deal with its rapid growth, the school district reports that it has hired approximately 1,000 new teachers each year for the past eight years. FDOE certification rules allow college graduates holding a bachelor’s degree or higher in fields other than education to obtain temporary certification by achieving a passing score on the appropriate subject area test.¹ This year, nearly 40% of the more than 1,300 new teachers hired did not major

¹ For more information, see <http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/level3.asp>.

in education and/or had not completed a formal internship as part of a college-level teacher preparation program. As a result, a great number of Polk County's recently hired teachers (many of them for ESE positions) lack adequate pre-service training and experience, requiring the new teachers to develop these skills while in the classroom. The school district has provided supports to newly hired teachers as they fill critical positions, but the results have been uneven. While it is understood that this is a state and national issue, it is also understood that the quality of the teachers that Polk County is able to attract and retain has direct consequences on just about every aspect of schooling: quality of instruction, learning outcomes, school climate and classroom management, professional development, instructional leadership, and so on.

Intervention Assistance Teams

The school district has acknowledged a need to reconceptualize the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) process—a process that is viewed more as a gatekeeper for special education than a way to provide genuine research-based strategies designed to assist learners in the general education setting. IAT was described as a “speed bump” on the road to getting a child “into” special education. The IAT process in Polk County is similar to those that have existed throughout the state and the country and are often described as “wait to fail” models. There was an acknowledged need to transition the IAT process to a more rigorous Response to Intervention (RtI) model.

The RtI model is a multi-tiered *prevention* model. The primary intervention (Tier 1) consists of a high-quality general education program with core instructional interventions based on research-based practices; Tier 2 consists of targeted group interventions, and Tier 3 focuses on tertiary intervention—the provision of intensive, specialized, individual or small-group interventions, which *may* include special education. An essential characteristic of RtI is that it requires frequent monitoring of student progress and ongoing refinements to interventions.

Many school-based and central office level staff acknowledged the need to move in this direction. In addition, a number of positive indicators suggest that the school district is prepared to engage in practices consistent with an RtI model:

- The instructional initiatives that have been introduced over the past two years are reported to provide excellent Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.
- The school district is beginning to provide student performance data to the schools online in an easily accessible format, thus promoting data-based decision making.
- A workgroup has been formed to develop an RtI model.

Disproportionality

The school district's ESE student membership data by race and ethnicity should be cause for concern. Although black students make up 21% of the overall school district population and 28% of the school district's population of students with disabilities, these

students are significantly overrepresented in programs for Emotionally Handicapped/Severely Emotionally Disturbed (39%) and Educable Mentally Handicapped (48%). While there are reported efforts to change enrollment characteristics, black and Hispanic students continue to be considerably underrepresented in the identified gifted population.

Recent data provided by FDOE show that the odds ratio for black students in Polk County being identified as Emotionally Handicapped/Severely Emotionally Disturbed is 2.4, and as Mentally Handicapped, 2.8. This means that black students are 2.4 times more likely to be identified as Emotionally Handicapped/Severely Emotionally Disturbed and 2.8 times more likely to be identified as Mentally Handicapped than students of all other races combined. Although these disproportionality indices are consistent with those of many other school districts throughout the state, they should be receiving considerable attention in Polk County as the school district reviews and revises its IAT model.

In reviewing the data on ESE placements, it appears that black students are served to a slightly higher percentage in separate classes and resource rooms than white students. However, review of the data with staff in FDOE resulted in the Core Team interpreting results cautiously, because there are indications that the data may be incorrect and/or incomplete. (For instance, in a recent data transmission to the state, no students were reported to the state as being in special schools, although that is clearly not the case.)

Implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

Much time and effort is spent on ensuring that IEPs are compliant. For example, Staffing Specialists spend a significant amount of time reviewing IEPs for completeness, despite the fact that the IEP is developed on a computerized system that can conduct many, if not most, of the compliance checks as each IEP is developed. Once the interviews had been completed, however, the Core Team was left with considerable concern as to whether the services and supports delineated in the IEPs were actually being delivered with the fidelity and consistency required. There was acknowledgement among the individuals and groups interviewed that principals and teachers bear the responsibility of ensuring that IEP services are actually being delivered, but there seemed to be no systematic way of determining if this is indeed happening.

IEPs have a significant impact on the learning and life opportunities of students with disabilities; they are considered to be contracts for services. When they are not implemented with a considerable degree of fidelity, they become the vehicles upon which both parent and state complaints and legal actions are filed.

Recommendations

- The school district's discipline code requires significant revision. Polk County students, with and without disabilities, are not performing as well as their counterparts in many other Florida counties. Students cannot be expected to

demonstrate enhanced learning when they are not being provided with an opportunity to be taught and to learn, i.e., if they are not in school or in the classroom. We would suggest (and a considerable body of research demonstrates) that suspensions and other punitive disciplinary actions help neither ESE students nor their peers without disabilities. (In fact, in an FCAT and NCLB environment, such actions do not benefit the school or school district, as suspended students lose valuable learning opportunities and, therefore, are less likely to contribute positively to Adequate Yearly Progress measures.) Too many Polk County professionals and, we suspect, citizens believe that the federal IDEA requires a “double standard” of discipline for ESE students. This is not the case, and many if not most school districts in Florida and elsewhere have adopted discipline codes that comply with law while at the same time build positive and safe learning environments for all students and their teachers. The school district has invested a considerable amount of dollars and time into PBIS training, and some schools have embarked on implementation of school-wide behavior interventions and supports. These investments should be continued and expanded. The school district’s Code of Discipline, however, does not reflect the principles of this training and contributes to what most interviewees agreed is a punitive learning environment.

- The school district needs to be more aggressive and competitive in its recruitment and retention of ESE teachers graduating from traditional teacher preparation programs. With technical assistance from such entities as the Professional Development Partnership (PDP) at the University of South Florida (USF), the school district should explore expanding options, such as its Greenhouse Project, to “grow its own” highly qualified personnel (e.g., a Para-to-Professional initiative). Staff from the PDP at USF indicated that the university is working toward re-establishing the special education program at the Lakeland Campus; the school district should collaborate with USF, and other local colleges and universities, to recruit these newly trained teachers. The school district should create incentives for out-of-field teachers to complete graduate-level programs from institutions with established teacher training programs in order to obtain their permanent certification.
- Work should continue on the revision of the school district’s IAT process, and that effort must include the active involvement of others external to the Student Services and ESE Departments (e.g., bilingual education, Senior Directors, principals).
- The school district needs to look very closely at the data around placements and race/ethnicity. These data should also be reviewed for each school and geographic area of the county.
- The majority of Polk County’s students with disabilities are educated in general education classrooms for most of the school day; therefore, responsibility to ensure appropriate service delivery is not solely an ESE responsibility—it is a school leadership and accountability issue. School principals must be provided with the supports to oversee IEP service delivery, but they must also be held accountable for delivering the required services, in the same way they are held accountable for

ensuring the delivery of all other educational supports within their buildings. The LEA facilitator, at schools assigned this position, must play a critical role in supporting the principal in overseeing IEP service delivery. District leadership should consider including a standard of accountability directly related to the delivery of services to ESE students in the principals' performance evaluations.

- Efforts must be made to ensure the accuracy of the data that are submitted to FDOE. These data provide very important information to guide the school district in its efforts to ensure that decision making and progress monitoring are based on reliable data. These data are also used by FDOE and other monitoring agencies to trigger compliance audits. The Core Team believes that the data may not be accurate in several critical areas (i.e., student placements [least restrictive environment], attendance, and discipline).

Section 2: Programs

Discussion

Least Restrictive Environment, Access to the Curriculum, and Graduation

The school district has made efforts to include students with disabilities in general education programs for larger portions of the school day. The most recent data (2006 LEA Profile) from FDOE indicate that about 50% of students with disabilities ages 6–21 spend 80% or more of their day in the regular classroom. This is about 5 percentage points lower than both the state average and other Florida school districts of comparable size. The district also has a larger percentage of students with disabilities being served in separate classes than both the state average and other Florida school districts of comparable size.

Access to the general education curriculum with instruction provided by highly qualified teachers is essential to increase the graduation rate with standard diplomas for students with disabilities. According to FDOE's 2006 LEA Profile, in 2003-2004 Polk County had an NCLB graduation rate for all students that was below the state average. The NCLB graduation rate for students with disabilities for that same period was substantially lower (26%) than both the state average and the average for school districts of similar size (37% and 38% respectively). The same document reports that, for the 2004-2005 school year, the percentage of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma by meeting all graduation requirements was only 20% as compared to 41% statewide and 40% for school districts of similar size.

The expectations for children with disabilities in Polk County appear to be low. Both placement data and staff interviews point to a tendency to guide students with moderate or even mild disabilities to a special diploma track. Without meaningful access to the general education curriculum in the elementary grades, the gap between ESE students

and their peers without disabilities is likely to be great. The ESE students are then more likely to be tracked into the special diploma option when this decision is made at the IEP meeting at the end of eighth grade.

Inclusion

It was clear from the interviews and the documents reviewed that staff at all levels are acutely aware of the school district's desire and intention to provide services to students with disabilities in more inclusive settings, i.e., the general education classroom. Although many interviewees stated a belief that there is a plan to move the school district toward this goal, no one could confirm the existence of a written plan containing objectives and specific benchmarks or timelines. Many interviewees expressed concern that there has not been sufficient forcefulness or consistency and clarity of the inclusive practices message from senior district leadership. The fact that inclusion is not referenced in the district's Strategic Plan and that much of the movement at the school level to create inclusive models has been voluntary, dependent on school-level administration being favorably disposed to the concept, lends credence to this concern.

The scattered implementation of inclusive models has led to significant issues as students advance in grade level and move from schools that have successfully implemented inclusion to feeder schools that do not. This is particularly true in the transition from elementary to middle school, given that most of the inclusive programs appear to be at the elementary level. Several staff reported that students either have to move to schools that require services to be delivered in more restrictive settings or transfer to schools outside their own feeder pattern that offer opportunities for inclusion.

In reviewing the school district's Staffing Plan for the 2006–2007 school year, it appears that the model used for ESE staffing (pp. 39–44) is anachronistic; it is based on a Florida funding model no longer in place, in that allocations to schools are based on contact hours and program "weighting" (e.g., EMH, EH). The plan also does not appear to address the realities of providing services in inclusive settings. However, the plan does indicate (p. 40) that a school may ask for a review of allocations if an inclusive model is being implemented.

The allocation of ESE units to the schools is a function assigned to the ESE Department, which separates it from the process used to allocate non-ESE units to the schools. The ESE Department reports that it has been able to review allocations at individual schools to ensure that they are not penalized for implementing co-teaching, support facilitation, or other models that support ESE students in general education settings. Principals, however, report that they are concerned that the implementation of inclusive practices will, in fact, result in the loss of teaching staff.

Program Options

When asked how the school district might increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities, the most frequent response among those interviewed was the need to increase the availability of career education programs. There are concerns, however, about students with disabilities having access to alternatives to traditional school programs, particularly magnet, academy, and career education opportunities. There is a belief that existing magnet and career academy programs are not welcoming of students with disabilities and that students with disabilities are routinely “counseled out.” (One exception is the Roosevelt Academy, which is exclusively for students with disabilities seeking a special diploma.)

Recommendations

- School district leadership have not been explicit enough about the district’s plan for improved student achievement among students with disabilities. School district and building-level administrators must ensure that, to the extent possible, students with disabilities remain on the same curriculum path as their non-disabled peers, with the same learning expectations that guide the instruction of all students. Students must be afforded opportunities to develop skills through a wide range of curriculum options, including career education, service learning, and community-based work experiences. Poor social and academic outcomes for students with disabilities are very often reflective of restricted learning experiences. The importance of the school leader in creating and maintaining an ongoing focus on school improvement that includes support for general and special educators in the implementation of inclusive practices in his or her school has been well established in both theory and practice. Therefore, school building principals must clearly articulate a school improvement agenda that is inclusive of the needs of all students. In order to respond to individual student needs, schools must adopt and implement practices that lead to a system of student need identification; i.e., accurate, relevant, and “real time” data available and utilized by every teacher. Leadership training for principals and teachers should emphasize the importance of raising expectations for students with disabilities and the expectation that these students make meaningful learning gains.
- The adoption of more inclusive educational structures, roles, and practices can no longer be an option for individual schools. The school district needs to develop an Inclusion Plan, with benchmarks, in order to (1) ensure that its stated commitment to expanding inclusive educational opportunities is institutionalized and (2) guide the schools in their efforts to effectively provide greater access to the general education curriculum to students with disabilities. We would like to see a goal regarding inclusion in the school district’s Strategic Plan. The district has supports in this effort through the Florida Inclusion Network and its own inclusion facilitators. It is clear, however, that more such supports will be required, along with ongoing professional development and some policy and procedural modifications.

- The unit allocation system that the school district currently employs to assign special education teachers does not support the sustainable development of inclusive practices. It is based on obsolete models of service delivery that do not adequately account for services provided in various inclusive settings. The ESE Department is aware of the need to revise the current system and is looking at methods and formulas used in nearby Florida school districts. We encourage the expeditious completion of this work so that a new allocation system will be in place for the 2007–2008 Staffing Plan.
- Academy and other choice programs must be inclusive, and new programs should be built on principles of universal design, i.e., with the presumption that students with disabilities and a range of other diverse learners will be welcomed, enrolled, and able to flourish.
- Individual school profiles, similar to the School District Profiles that FDOE produces annually, have been under development by the ESE Department. We strongly encourage the completion of this task. This information will be invaluable to the school district and its schools in terms of measuring progress toward more inclusiveness, as well as on a number of important student performance and outcome indicators. School District Profiles can be used as a measure for Senior Directors in School-Based Operations to use as they work and evaluate the principals under their supervision. Principals must be made aware that the operation of ESE programs and services, as well as the outcomes of their students with disabilities, are being scrutinized.

Section 3: Organizational Orientation and Structure

Discussion

The Core Team carefully analyzed the current organizational structure of Polk County's ESE, Student Services, and other departments through a review of role descriptions, organizational charts, school district manuals, and other documents. In addition, the team assessed the orientation of the school district toward meeting the need of students with special learning needs. While conducting interviews with staff at the school district and school levels, questions were posed to assist the team in assessing the staff members' awareness of organizational structures and protocols, and determining the efficiency and effectiveness of current structures in ensuring the delivery of services to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. The team also hoped to ascertain the attitude of the educators toward students who present learning and/or behavioral challenges.

There is strong evidence that there are foundations in place for achieving the Superintendent's stated goal of improving student achievement throughout the school district. However, the Core Team sensed a pervasive culture of low expectations in the Polk County Public Schools, not only for students who are identified as having disabilities but for many other students who are viewed as disadvantaged. The Strategic Plan 2005–2008 speaks to making changes in that mindset and increasing accountability for student achievement.

The school district has a legacy of operating in a very decentralized manner, with school principals viewed as “CEOs” of their buildings and therefore able to take or leave direction and advice. While this is beginning to change under the current leadership, a remnant of this legacy is a sense of powerlessness on the part of ESE Department leadership and personnel when it comes to ensuring that the school district remains in compliance with the law, or that it adopts and implements instructional practices at the school level that would benefit students with disabilities as well as other diverse learners. The ESE Department, as well as other departments led by individuals at the director level, is not viewed as having the organizational position or authority to make demands of school-based leaders—even when those demands are in the best interest of the school district with regard to statutory compliance, or in the best interest of an individual student with a disability with regard to his or her education. Audits of IEPs conducted at a number of schools by the ESE Department reflect a worrisome pattern of inattention to critical details. In examining outcome data for students served by the existing special education system, we see alarming data showing that these students are not graduating with standard diplomas by meeting all graduation requirements or dropping out. As stated earlier, the Core Team completed its work with considerable concern about the delivery of IEP services—those very services that might have improved the likelihood that these students would stay in school and graduate with a standard diploma.

The ESE Department has a central office presence as well as five Area Offices, each headed by a Senior Manager who reports to the ESE Director. Each Area Office is also staffed with other ESE personnel, including Staffing Specialists, Behavior Specialists, and secretaries. Four of the areas have geographic boundaries that designate the schools to be served. Area Office school assignments do not align with those of School-Based Operations and the assignments of its Senior Directors who have day-to-day supervisory responsibility of the schools. As a result, Senior Directors for elementary, middle, and senior high schools may need to deal with more than one ESE Area Office when seeking support and/or assistance for schools. There is a need to break down “silos” within the organization that impede cooperation, collaboration, and efficient service delivery to all students, particularly those in need of temporary or ongoing learning support services.

It was not clear if school-based personnel and Senior Directors in School-Based Operations have a clear understanding as to how they can obtain technical assistance from the ESE Department. The decision of whom to call appears to be based more on personal relationships and prior positive or negative experiences than clearly delineated methods and lines of communication. (It was telling that while forms have been disseminated for seeking assistance from ESE, there were principals and Senior Directors who were not aware of their existence.)

Of major concern is the ability of the ESE Department to impact compliance and effect change at the school level. There was clear indication of a lack of efficacy on the part of the department when it came to interactions with principals and other school-based personnel. In addition, as has been true in many Florida school districts, monitoring

and/or auditing of schools by the school district's ESE office has been focused on "paper compliance" rather than on the actual delivery of services to students, or on determining their impact on student achievement.

Of equal concern is the school district's capacity to effectively meet the learning support needs of an increasingly diverse student body and their families. Students have a broad continuum of learning support needs that must be matched by a broad continuum of services. In order for such a dynamic learning support continuum to be developed and maintained, the ESE and Student Services Departments in particular must communicate, collaborate, and coordinate their resources in significantly new ways.

The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) that serves Polk and Hardee counties is part of a statewide network that provides diagnostic and instructional support services to the school districts' ESE programs and families of students with disabilities. According to FDOE, FDLRS has four functions: Child Find, Parent Services, Human Resource Development, and Technology. The reporting line for FDLRS in Polk County was moved from the ESE Director to the Director of Professional Development. Although that appears to have strengthened the ties to the professional development unit, FDLRS has functions beyond professional development that are better supervised by and coordinated through the ESE Department.

Recommendations

The guiding principal of the Core Team's recommendations regarding organizational issues is that there needs to be a coordinated, efficient, and effective range of learning supports provided to Polk County students that will increase the likelihood that students will stay in school, achieve to their full potential, and graduate with standard diplomas by meeting all graduation requirements. There is a need to break down "silos" within the organization that impede cooperation, collaboration, and efficient service delivery to all students. Effective schools are organized around meeting the needs of individual students rather than groups of students, regardless of the label(s) or category(s) assigned to a child (disabled, disadvantaged, challenged, etc.).

Efforts need to be focused on early intervention, rather than a "wait to fail" model that expends resources on referrals leading to testing for ESE placement purposes. ESE has long been viewed as a viable strategy for students who are not performing academically or are presenting troublesome behaviors. IATs have been viewed as the conduit to special education placements. Special education has traditionally operated as a parallel system—one that is not well-aligned with or connected to general education. When a student is moved into the special education system, expectations have been altered. In examining the outcomes for students placed in the existing special education system, we see alarming numbers who are failing to graduate with a standard diploma by meeting all graduation requirements or dropping out.

The Department of Student Services is a critical ally of the ESE Department in ensuring compliance with the law, determining individual student eligibility for ESE services, communicating and collaborating with a host of public and private agencies in the service of students and their families, providing professional development and guidance to schools that prevents issues from arising and improves practice, and designing and operating services that support learning. In tandem, these two departments are responsible for a critical set of obligations under the law and in promoting and supporting best practices; they also represent a significant proportion of the school district's expenditure of resources. In order for these departments to have maximum impact on student learning outcomes, it is essential that the ESE and Student Services Departments collaborate in an effective and efficient manner. While a more in depth analysis may be warranted regarding the staffing of particular roles within these departments (e.g., social workers), the Core Team believes that, at the present time, there is sufficient staff at the district level for these departments to fulfill their respective duties. The need is for leadership, alignment, and appropriate delegations of responsibility and authority.

- We recommend that the school district establish a Division of Learning Support Services, to be led by an Assistant Superintendent who reports to the Associate Superintendent for Learning. The Assistant Superintendent would oversee the development, coordination, quality control, and maintenance of school district initiatives dedicated to supporting children and youth with and without disabilities who require temporary or ongoing assistance with their learning. The Assistant Superintendent would assist Associate Superintendents and Senior Directors in the coaching and evaluation of school principals and other school-based administrators. Other duties would include the following:
 - Providing leadership in ensuring the effective coordination of learning support services offered by ESE and Student Services.
 - Collaborating with the leadership of School-Based Operations in the design and implementation of a broad range of professional development opportunities, programs, and initiatives to improve instruction and student performance.
 - Setting goals and recommending strategies for enhancing inclusive educational practices across the school district.
 - Monitoring the school district's compliance with state and federal laws, State Board of Education Rules pertaining to the delivery of special education and related services to students with disabilities, and other requirements involving the services of guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists, health, and other Student Services professionals.
 - Analyzing student performance, discipline, service delivery, statutory compliance, fiscal, human resource, and other relevant data to recommend new program and/or service development.

- Collaborating with community agencies, parent and advocacy organizations, teacher training institutions, and other organizations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning support services.
- Assisting in the preparation, presentation, and implementation of the district-wide budget, and overseeing the administration of that portion of the budget related to ESE and Student Services.
- Overseeing the development of the federal special education grant application and the use of these funds to benefit students with disabilities.
- We believe that this division and the establishment of a position at the level of Assistant Superintendent is critical for a number of reasons:
 - Given its scope of responsibilities, this position needs to be situated appropriately within the organization in order to have the requisite leverage with Senior Directors and school principals.
 - A position at the Superintendent's cabinet level puts Learning Support Services at a level commensurate with the importance of both its charge and its potential impact on organizational and student performance.
 - The school district must be able to attract good leadership candidates with vision and experience from across the country; therefore, it is necessary to have a position that is at a level commensurate with what other large school districts offer.
 - The school district is going to exceed the 100,000 student enrollment mark soon and, from a leadership perspective, needs to be organized in ways that reflect its size and the complexity of its charge.
- For reasons similar to those expressed above, the positions of ESE Director and Director of Student Services should be reclassified as Senior Director positions, both of whom report to the Assistant Superintendent. This is consistent with our recommendation that these directors collaborate and work more closely with the Senior Directors in School-Based Operations. Organizationally, the Senior Director for Student Services should have the same units reporting to him or her as do currently. A critical emphasis and collaborating point for these two positions will be to lead the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of academic and behavioral supports for all students. Such a system of learning supports will align the school district's Code of Conduct with federal and state laws, principles of school-wide PBIS, and contemporary best practices in school-based mental health and other support services for students and their families.
- The Core Team understands that plans have been underway to relocate the central office leadership and staff of the Student Services Department. If at all possible, we would recommend that such a move not be implemented. As a new Division of Learning Support Services is being organized, its operational norms and routines established, the proximity of ESE and Student Services leadership and staff is crucial to team building and the coordination of school, student, and family support services.

- School assignments of ESE's Area Office Senior Managers and the staff reporting to them at the Area Offices should be aligned with those of the Senior Directors for the elementary, middle, and high schools. We believe this will go a long way toward improving communication across the organization and will provide for coordinated compliance oversight and technical assistance to the schools. Each Senior Director will work with one ESE Senior Manager. A review of where ESE Area Offices and staff are physically located may be required.
- The roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of LEA Facilitators need to be more clearly defined. Greater scrutiny is required to make sure that the work of these individuals is focused on assisting school principals in ensuring (1) compliance with the law and (2) that ESE students are receiving services as designated on their IEPs. Persons selected for these positions must have the requisite experience and knowledge to fulfill these responsibilities and to support general and special educators who instruct and support students with disabilities. LEA Facilitators primary responsibilities should include:
 - Supporting the principal in ensuring appropriate delivery of instructional and related services to ESE students in accordance with IEPs.
 - Providing support and technical assistance to teachers in developing, implementing, and monitoring IEPs.
 - Supporting district and building leadership in monitoring procedural compliance with federal and state law and regulations relative to ESE.
 - Providing assistance to administrators, special education teachers and general education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum and programs.
 - Communicating and working with parents of students with disabilities.
- The role of the Staffing Specialists needs to be reviewed, particularly in relation to the LEA Facilitators. It may not be necessary for the Staffing Specialists to process every initial placement. It may be possible for the LEA Facilitators to handle high-incidence disabilities (e.g., SLD initial staffings at the school), leaving the Staffing Specialists to manage the cases of students who have more complex service needs or who require specialized programs that may be delivered in a venue other than the students' home schools. The compliance reviews that Staffing Specialists conduct need to be organized in a more systematic way, focus on both compliance and service delivery, and be conducted in concert with other school-site reviews that may be scheduled by School-Based Operations Senior Directors. Staffing Specialists primary responsibilities should include:
 - Managing initial evaluation cases through to staffing.
 - Conducting initial staffings in schools not assigned an LEA facilitator for programs for low incidence disabilities (e.g., autism, PMH).
 - Conducting IEP meetings and other meetings related to dispute resolution.

- Providing technical assistance, training, and support to principals and designated school-level ESE contact persons (including LEA facilitators) at the schools assigned with a focus on supporting efforts to ensure IEP service delivery.
- Supporting the efforts of the Florida Inclusion Network staff by providing technical assistance to schools relative to the inclusion of students with disabilities.
- Participating in school-site reviews that may be scheduled by School-Based Operations Senior Directors.
- Providing technical assistance and support to School-Based Operations Senior Directors.
- Staff in the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) need to focus their expertise on assisting the school district in developing a plan for expanding and supporting inclusive practices in all schools by a specified date. This effort must be viewed as a system priority and not as an ESE initiative. However, the limited FIN staff cannot be expected to carry out the school-level training and support necessary to implement such a plan. Therefore, it is important that all ESE Facilitators in the district office become “inclusion facilitators” to assist schools in making the transition to inclusive models and practices.
- There is a continued need for the existence of district-level staff to engage in deliberate program and support service development for students with more significant disabilities: autism, emotional and behavior disorders, profound multiple handicaps, deafness, and vision impairment. All district-level facilitators’ efforts need to focus on expanding inclusive programming options for these students. Critically, the school district needs to develop and implement a research-based model for delivering educational and related services to children and youth with autism spectrum disorders. The expertise and experiences of Polk County Public School professionals, parents and families, and state and national experts should be drawn on to develop such a plan.
- Schools that exclusively serve students with disabilities (special centers) should report to a Senior Director in School-Based Operations. In this way, these schools will be viewed as just as much a part of the Polk County Public Schools as the other district schools. Such a reporting line will also help keep center administrators “in the loop” regarding all of the initiatives and activities of the school system as a whole and, for student achievement accountability purposes, allow these schools to be supervised in the same manner as other district schools. Although there is concern among Core Team members regarding the potential for increases in placements in these schools if the ESE Department is no longer serving as “gatekeeper,” we believe that the leadership of School-Based Operations can make certain that these schools do not become “dumping grounds.” To that end, individual student placements in these centers should be closely scrutinized.

- FDLRS should report to the Senior Director of ESE so that (1) all functions directly relating to ESE programs in the school district are contained within that department and (2) there can be an increased emphasis on parent services and support.

Summary

In December 2006, the Polk County Public Schools entered into a contractual agreement with the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative (the Collaborative) to conduct a review of the school district's programs and services to students with disabilities. The purpose of the review was to generate recommendations that would assist the school district in its efforts to improve outcomes for these students. To that end, an External Core Team of three experienced special education leaders reviewed hundreds of reports, training materials, policies and procedures, staffing plans, program descriptions, organizational charts and role descriptions, state records, and other documents. They also interviewed more than 100 Polk County education professionals, parent leaders, and others who could provide insight and perspective on areas of concern, as well as recommendations for how outcomes for students with disabilities might be improved. Additionally, Core Team members spoke with a number of Florida State Department of Education (FDOE) professionals and others knowledgeable of the county's educational and other support services to children and youth with disabilities and their families.

Overall, the External Core Team found that the School District's leadership was committed to improving the achievement of all students, including those with disabilities. The Team also found that, beyond a stated commitment, there was solid evidence of emerging practices and organizational supports that held significant promise for improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. For example, schools are becoming more inclusive and adopting research-based strategies for improving learning environments; data are being organized and presented to central office and school-based personnel with sufficient detail and in a user-friendly form to promote data-based decision making; there is an initiative underway to revamp the current Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) process with a model that is consistent with a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach to identifying and serving students with special needs; and, although the school district has some schools that exclusively serve students with disabilities (center schools), there is no indication that these schools have been over enrolled.

This report provides a presentation and discussion of the Core Team's findings, as well as a range of recommendations organizational, programmatic, and/or service delivery changes that should be made in order to improve outcomes for Polk County's students with disabilities. A critical contextual finding is that there is currently a culture of low

expectations with regard to these students' performance capabilities. School district and building-level leaders must forcefully and consistently challenge this culture as, without a change of expectation, all other school district efforts to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, and other traditionally marginalized groups of students, will have minimal impact.

A summary of the Core Team's recommendations follows:

1. Service Delivery

- The school district's discipline code requires significant revision.
- The school district needs to be more aggressive and competitive in its recruitment and retention of ESE teachers graduating from traditional teacher preparation programs. Additionally, it needs to create incentives for out-of-field teachers to complete graduate-level programs from institutions with established teacher training programs in order to obtain their permanent certification.
- Work should continue on the revision of the school district's IAT process, and that effort must include the active involvement of others external to the Student Services and ESE Departments (e.g., bilingual education, Senior Directors, principals).
- The school district needs to look very closely at the data around placements and race/ethnicity. These data should also be reviewed for each school and geographic area of the county.
- School principals must be provided with the supports to oversee IEP service delivery, but they must also be held accountable for delivering the required services.
- Efforts must be made to ensure the accuracy of the data that are submitted to FDOE.

2. Programs

- School district and building-level administrators must ensure that, to the extent possible, students with disabilities remain on the same curriculum path as their non-disabled peers, with the same learning expectations that guide the instruction of all students.
- Leadership training for principals and teachers should emphasize the importance of raising expectations for students with disabilities and the expectation that these students make meaningful learning gains.
- The school district needs to develop an Inclusion Plan, with benchmarks, in order to (1) ensure that its stated commitment to expanding inclusive educational opportunities is institutionalized and (2) guide the schools in their efforts to effectively provide greater access to the general education curriculum to students with disabilities.

- The unit allocation system that the school district currently employs to assign special education teachers must be revised in order to support the sustainable development of inclusive practices.
- Academy and other choice programs must be inclusive, and new programs should be built on principles of universal design.
- Individual school profiles, similar to the School District Profiles that FDOE produces annually, should be developed, disseminated throughout the school district, and serve as the basis for individual school improvement planning.

3. Organizational Orientation and Structure

- The school district should establish a Division of Learning Support Services, to be led by an Assistant Superintendent who reports to the Associate Superintendent for Learning.
- The positions of ESE Director and Director of Student Services should be reclassified as Senior Director positions.
- If at all possible and practical, the ESE and Student Services Departments should be housed in close proximity to one another.
- School assignments of ESE's Area Office Senior Managers and the staff reporting to them at the Area Offices should be aligned with those of the Senior Directors for the elementary, middle, and high schools.
- The roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of LEA Facilitators need to be more clearly defined.
- The role of the Staffing Specialists needs to be reviewed, particularly in relation to the LEA Facilitators.
- Staff in the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) need to focus their expertise on assisting the school district in developing a plan for expanding and supporting inclusive practices in all schools by a specified date.
- All district-level facilitators' efforts need to focus on expanding inclusive programming options for students with more significant disabilities.
- The school district needs to develop and implement a research-based model for delivering educational and related services to children and youth with autism spectrum disorders.
- Schools that exclusively serve students with disabilities (special centers) should report to a Senior Director in School-Based Operations.
- FDLRS should report to the Senior Director of ESE.

In the aggregate, the External Core Team's recommendations are far reaching and require a cultural shift in the way in which many Polk County educators currently view students with disabilities, special education, and the supports that students with and without disabilities need in order to succeed. The Core Team appreciates, as should the leadership, staff, and parents of the Polk County Public Schools, that it will take time to make all of the changes these recommendations suggest.

Appendix A: Resumes of External Core Team Members

Resume
David P. Riley
71 Moss Hill Road
Boston, MA 02130
1-617-618-2340 • fax: 1-617-969-3440
e-mail: driley@edc.org

Education:

- Ph. D. Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York
Emphasis: Special Education Administration

- M.A. University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut
Emphasis: Special Education

- B.A. Boston State College, Boston, Massachusetts
Emphasis: Sociology

Experience:

- 1994-Present Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative
- Executive Director

- 1979 - Present Massachusetts Urban Project, Boston, Massachusetts
- Executive Director

- 1976 - 1979 The Boston Project, Boston, Massachusetts
- Director

- 1975 – 1976 Hopkinton Public Schools, Hopkinton, Massachusetts
- Director of Pupil Personnel Services

- 1974 – 1975 Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, D.C.
- Legislative Coordinator

- 1969 - 1972 Windsor Public Schools, Windsor, Connecticut
-Teacher/Coordinator, Educational Work Experience Program
Windsor High School

Consultancies:

1979 – Present	Cities of Boston, Brockton, Fall River, New Bedford, Lawrence, Pittsfield, Chicopee, Springfield, Framingham, Cambridge, Gardner, Somerville, Fitchburg, Lowell, Lynn, and Worcester as members of the Massachusetts Urban Project
1979 - 1981	Indianapolis Public Schools, Indianapolis, Indiana, Department of Special Education – Special Education Systemic Renewal
1979	New York City Board of Education, New York, New York Division of Special Education – Organizational/Management Consultant
1979 – 1980	Portland Public Schools, Portland, Maine, Department of Special Services -- Organizational and Program Review
1981	West Suburban Association for Special Education, Oak Park, Illinois -- Organizational Consultant
1982 – 1983	Department of Education, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico -- Organizational Consultant
Spring 1989	Fitchburg Public Schools, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, -- Program Evaluation
1989 – 1990	Worcester Vocational Technical School, Worcester, Massachusetts, -- Program and Management Evaluation
1990 - 1993	Chicago Public Schools, Department of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services, Chicago, Illinois -- Organizational Consultant
1990 - 1991	Massachusetts Department of Education, Division of Special Education -- Special Project on Urban Special Education
1990 - 1993	Framingham Public Schools, Framingham, Massachusetts, Department of Special Education -- Program Evaluations
1994	Office of the Mayor, Town of Cumberland, Rhode Island -- Special Education Program Review
Fall 1994	Newark Public Schools, Newark, New Jersey, Office of the Superintendent of Schools -- Program Evaluation

1991 – 1997	Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District, Ashburnham, Massachusetts -- Special Education Program Evaluations
1994 - 1996	Brookline Public Schools, Brookline, Massachusetts -- Organizational Review and Special Education Cost Analysis
1994 - 1997	Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. -- Organizational Consultant to Director
1995- Present	New Bedford Public Schools, New Bedford, Massachusetts -- Organizational and Programmatic Renewal
1995 – 1997	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. -- Organizational Consultant to the Assistant Secretary of Education
1995-1996	Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. -- Organizational Consultant to the Commissioner
Spring 1996	National Institutes of Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. -- Organizational Consultant to the Director
1996	Humble Independent School District, Humble, Texas -- Curriculum Budget Audit
1997	Lowell Public Schools, Lowell, Massachusetts -- organizational study of Lowell High School Special Education Department
1997	Northeast Regional Resource Center, Burlington, Vermont – urban special education consultant
1998	Brockton Public Schools, Brockton, MA -- Organizational Review
1998-1999	Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Virginia – Project Evaluation, Beacons of Excellence Project
2004	Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada – Organizational Consultant to Associate Superintendent
Spring 2005	Salem Public Schools, Salem, MA – Program Review

Federal Project Leadership

1997- 2005	National Institute for Urban School Improvement - Co-Director
1998-2003	ILIAD Partnership, Council for Exceptional Children, Primary Partner
2000-2005	Linking Academic Scholars to Educational Resources (LASER) Project, University of South Florida, National Advisory Council Member
2000-Present	Educational Policy Reform Research Institute, University of Maryland, Leadership Team Member
2002-2005	National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, Networking and Dissemination Director
2004-Present	National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, Clemson University, Leadership Team Member

Additional Experience of Note:

1993-Present	Co-chair, Harvard Graduate School of Education's Annual Summer Institute on Critical Issues in Urban Special Education
1997-2002	Urban Strand Leader, Council for Exceptional Children Annual Conventions
1999-Present	Editorial Review Board, <i>Journal of Special Education Leadership</i>
2001	Consultant to Defendant in Chandra Smith, et al. v. Los Angeles Unified School District, et al.
2001-2002	Audit Team Leader to Parties in Duane B., et al. v. Chester Upland School District, et al.
2001-2002	Consultant to Defendant in Emma C., et al v. Delaine Eastin, et al., Ravenswood, California
2003	Guest Editor, <i>Journal of Special Education Leadership</i> Special Issue on Critical Issues in Urban Special Education
2003-present	Consultant to the Office of the Independent Monitor, Los Angeles Unified School District

2004- present	Member, Professional Advisory Board, National Center for Learning Disabilities
2004- 2005	Consultant to Defendant in Vaughn G., et al v. Baltimore City Public School System, Baltimore, Maryland

Recent Presentations of Note:

Expanding the Research to Practice Conversation: A Look at the Role of Market Research. OSEP Research Project Directors' Conference, Washington, D.C., July 14, 2000.

Winkin', Blinkin', & Nod: Reflections for Urban Educators. Summer Institute, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, June 21, 2001.

Urban Parents' Perspectives on Inclusion. IDEA Summit, Arlington, VA, June 22, 2001.

Urban Schools - Urban Issues: *Lessons Learned from Four Years of Working in Urban Districts.* National Institute for Urban School Improvement presentation at OSEP Research Project Directors' Conference, Washington, D.C., July 12, 2001.

Promoting a National Dialogue on Inclusive Education. 2nd National Summit on The Shared Implementation of IDEA, Washington, D.C., June 20, 2003.

Parent Partnerships in Urban School Districts: Successes and Challenges. Region 2 Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers, June 22, 2006

Gayle V. Amos

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Olney, Maryland 20832

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Education

M.Ed. Special Education

University of Maryland, College Park, MD
5/1974

Additional Graduate Course Work

Education Administration, Leadership, Policy and Planning.
University of Maryland, College Park, MD
1991-1992.

Education Administration/ Supervision
Rutgers State University, Camden, NJ
1983-1984.

Special Education – Learning Disabilities
Glassboro State College, Glassboro, NJ
1978-1979.

BA English

Delaware State College, Dover, Del
5/1972

Certifications:

Administrative (Assistant Superintendent) Principal, Supervisor of Instruction, Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant, Teacher of Special Education, Teacher of English

Professional Organizations

American Association of School Administrators
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Council for Exceptional Children/Administrative Division

Professional Experience

5/2006 to Present
District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
Office of Academic Services
825 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002

Position: Assistant Superintendent, Academic Services

Under the direction of the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) responsible, for providing oversight of programs and services for students with disabilities, programs and services for English Language Learners (ELL), programs and services for advanced learners (Collegeboard, SAT, Advanced Placement, Gifted and Talented), and programs and services for extended year requirements (summer school, after school, tutorial services). As Assistant Superintendent, serves as DCPS senior staff, member of Superintendent's Leadership cabinet, and delegate authority for coordinating and monitoring the effectiveness of all operations under the Office of Academic Services. Position also responsible for overseeing subordinate activities contributing to the achievement of the Superintendent's Master Education Plan, and ensuring compliance with local and federal laws governing the operations of the DC school system.

Special knowledge and skills: Possess strong organizational, operational, interpersonal, and public relations skills; ability to work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders in support of school system's mission; effective oral and written communication skills; ability to organize multiple concurrent tasks.

10/2000 to 1/2006

Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS)

200 East North Avenue

Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Position: Student Support Services Officer (Assistant Superintendent)

Under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), managed a comprehensive system of student support services, including oversight of the offices of student placement; attendance and suspension services; mental health, social work, and nursing services; programs for the homeless, home schooling, and infants and toddlers. Supervised district specialized programs and compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Americans with Disabilities Act. Directed the implementation of court mandated procedures and the offices of Special Education Monitoring and Compliance (OSEMC) the Special Education Tracking System (SETS) and Compensatory Awards (OCA) under *Vaughn G. et al., vs. the Baltimore City Public School District Board of School Commissioners* Consent Decrees. Maintained collaborative relationships with central Divisions of Curriculum and Instruction, Finance, Human Resources, Technology, Accountability, Transportation, and Facilities.

Coordinated the administrative and financial activities of the Division of Student Support Services, including supervising a central office staff of approximately 175 staff members and managing a budget of over 235 million dollars. Member of senior district leadership team directly accountable for the development, implementation and evaluation of two of six objectives of State required "Strategic Master Plan" (Compliance with IDEA and Safe and Drug Free Schools). Collaborated on a daily basis with area superintendents regarding management of regular and special education schools, programs, and services, and provided advisory assistance in determining resource allocations and levels of support services needed. Advised and directed CEO and Board of School Commissioners on how to address key challenges and issues, especially in regards to meeting requirements of IDEA, *Vaughn G.* Consent Decrees, and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Facilitated partnership support from Mayor's office and city government agencies (Baltimore City Health Department, Division of Juvenile Services and Division of Social Services.), public and private institutions, and non-profit organizations.

Special knowledge and skills: Possess strong organizational, operational, interpersonal, and public relations skills; ability to work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders in support of school system's mission; possess knowledge of civil rights laws and federal mandates applicable to public schools; highly knowledgeable regarding curriculum, instruction, teaching, learning, and best practices; demonstrated leadership in the supervision of professional staff and ability to seek solutions to complex issues; proven competence as a financial and administrative manager and ability to model and encourage personal accountability; effective oral and written communication skills; ability to organize multiple concurrent tasks; ability to use data and research to support decision making.

Accomplishments: Successful completion of seven of 15 "Ultimate Measurable Outcomes" required by *Vaughn G. et. al, vs. the Baltimore City Public School District Board of School Commissioners*, 2000 Consent Decree; designed, implemented, and maintained diverse, complex, and highly visible successful programs for students with disabilities with private school partner Kennedy Krieger, Catapult Learning Systems, and Georgetown University; guided the development of nationally recognized Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Enhancement Program; initiated partnership with the Baltimore City Public School System Teacher's Union and Baltimore Community College to prepare para-professionals for employment as Special Education teachers; established effective school-based truancy programs with Division of Juvenile Services and Baltimore City Police Department.

10/1997 to 10/2000

**Baltimore City Public School System
200 East North Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21202**

Position: Managing Director of Special Education and Student and Family Services

Under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), developed, coordinated, and evaluated a comprehensive system of student services, including mental health, guidance and counseling, school health, and social work, as well as management of the offices of attendance and suspension services. Responsible for the planning and implementation of system-wide and school-based programs and services for students with disabilities in accordance with board policy and state and federal rules and regulations. Provided advisory assistance to area superintendents in the selection, supervision, and evaluation of school-based administrative staff. Directed the implementation of court mandated procedures and the offices of the Special Education Tracking System (SETS) and Compensatory Awards (OCA), under *Vaughn G. et. al., vs. the Baltimore City Public School District Board of School Commissioners* Consent Decrees. Developed and maintained collaborative relationships with central Divisions of Curriculum and Instruction, Finance, Human Resources, Technology, Transportation, Accountability, and Facilities.

Managed the administrative and financial activities of the Department of Special Education and Student and Family Services, including supervision of approximately 135 centralized staff members and managing a budget of over 200 million dollars. Advised and directed CEO and Board of School Commissioners on how to address key challenges and issues, especially in regards to meeting the requirements of IDEA, the *Vaughn G.* Consent Decrees, and NCLB. Facilitated partnership support from government agencies, public and private institutions, and non-profit organizations.

Special knowledge and skills: Possess strong organizational, operational, interpersonal, and public relations skills and the ability to work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders in support of school system's mission; broad knowledge of urban special education programs and services as well as knowledge of public school laws, state requirements, and federal mandates related to the delivery of instructional, support and specialized services; management of state and federal grants; excellent oral and written communication skills; ability to organize multiple concurrent task; ability to use data and research to support decision making; and ability to plan and organize outreach for adult learners, including conference presentations, workshops, publications, videos, brochures, and training materials.

Accomplishments: Successful negotiations with the Federal Court and Maryland State Department of Education in the development of fifteen "Ultimate Measurable Outcomes" for district disengagement from court oversight of special education. (*Vaughn G. 2000 Consent Decree.*) Successful negotiations with the Federal Court and the Maryland State Department of Education in the revision of the Office of Compensatory Awards (the awarding of "Goods" to students with disabilities who missed required related and/or instructional services was eliminated). Developed and maintained a nationally recognized model for the provision of mental health services with the University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore City Health Department, and private agency partnerships. Conceptualized, developed, copyrighted and published *Steps for Instructing Diverse Learners*, 1999.

8/1992 to10/1997

**Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Career Technology and Adult Learning
Adult Correctional Education Program
200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201**

Position: Director of Special Education, State Correctional Institutions

Provided leadership and oversight of alternative and special education programs in adult correctional facilities. Ensured compatibility and compliance of school programs with state and federal guidelines for public safety. Responsible for supervision of centralized multidisciplinary team of specialists including psychologists, speech and language pathologists, and transition coordinators; prepared program budget and federal grants; advised principals regarding evaluations of school-based staff. Maintained all state required reports and records. Directed the implementation of court mandated procedures for the provision of special education services under *Melvin C. et al., vs. Department of Public Safety and Maryland State Department of Education*. Revised and/or refined all policies and procedures in accordance with state and federal rules and regulations, developed goals and objectives for program evaluation, instituted system wide compliance monitoring procedures, and developed and implemented training programs for school staff and Division of Correction personnel. Coordinated program requirements with other correctional education programs, the Maryland Division of Correction institutional services, the Education Division of the Maryland State Attorney General's Office and Maryland State Department of Education Division of Special Education and Early Intervention Services.

Special knowledge and skills: Demonstrated knowledge of special education program development, and state and federal regulations related to the delivery of individualized related and/ or instructional services in correctional (prison) settings; demonstrated ability in leadership and supervision of professional staff; knowledge of implementation of adult training programs; ability to work collaboratively with diverse groups of professionals with common goals; excellent oral and written communication skills.

Accomplishments: Successful resolution/ disengagement from *Melvin C. et al., vs. Department of Public Safety and the Maryland State Department of Education*. Developed national model for initial comprehensive diagnostic educational screening of inmates under twenty-two entering adult prison systems.

1979 – 1990

**Lower Camden County Regional High School District No I
200 Coopers Folly Rd., Atco, JN 08004**

Positions and Responsibilities- Assistant Principal, Supervisor of Instruction, and Chairperson Child Study Team and Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant

1987 – 1990 Assistant Principal: Overbrook Regional Senior High School.

Assisted in the general administration and supervision of school in areas assigned by the principal, including student discipline and parent conferences; supervised assigned teachers and para professionals; participated in curriculum development and revision activities; prepared and reviewed department budgets; interviewed and assisted in the selection of new staff members; planned and conducted in-service programs for new teacher orientation; participated in the planning, implementation and evaluation of district staff development/teacher training programs; conducted training sessions for district administrators on supervision and evaluation practices; observed and evaluated Child Study Team members (psychologists, learning specialists, social workers, and speech and language pathologists); supervised placement of students in special programs.

1984 – 1987 Supervisor of Instruction, Central Office.

Supervision and coordination of district programs for special services; staff development, and teacher training including the supervision of the planning, structuring and revision of integrated district curriculum; development of community-based resource programs; observation and evaluation of district staff including child study team members; planned and conducted staff development workshops for “Effective Instruction”; wrote and monitored state and federal grants for special education.

1979–1984 Chairperson, Child Study Team and Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant

Member of school-based multi-disciplinary Individualized Education Program (IEP) team required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education ACT (IDEA) and New Jersey State regulations for the provision of special education services; participated in all decisions regarding the evaluation, eligibility, and need for specialized instructional and/or related support services for students referred at the middle and high school levels; conducted formal and informal assessments of student achievement; developed IEPs and 504 service plans for students determined eligible for special services; consulted/collaborated with teachers regarding the development of appropriate instructional strategies and the implementation of classroom modifications and accommodations.

Special knowledge and skills (1979-1990): Knowledge of special education programs and services and state and federal rules and regulations related to the delivery of instructional and/or related services; ability to lead strategic planning activities; experience in the selection, supervision and evaluation of school-based staff; success in implementing standards based teaching and learning programs at the school level; operational knowledge of school organization; knowledge of assessment systems designed to diagnose individual student academic needs in the area of literacy; strong knowledge of cognitive theory and how children learn; ability to seek and apply best practices

1972-1979

Summary of Experience

Lawnside Elementary School, Lawnside, NJ. Learning Disability Teacher Consultant

Melvin C. Kreps Middle School, Highstown, NJ. Teacher of Special Education

Dix Street Academy, Washington, D.C. Teacher of English

Related Experience

Consultant for the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative.

2006- Special Education Consultation Team, Hartford Public Schools, Hartford, Connecticut

2005-2006 Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles, California (*Chanda Smith, et al., vs. Los Angeles Unified School District, et al.*)

2002- Chester Upland School District, Chester, Pennsylvania (*Duane D., et al., vs. Chester Upland School District*).

Consultant for the North Carolina Department of Correction.

1997- Provided “Expert” testimony for level of State compliance with regulations for provision of special education services. (*Franklin D., et al., vs. State of North Carolina, Department of Correction*).

Publication

2003 “CASE IN POINT: A Special Education Law suit: Catalyst for Positive Systemic Change? Maybe. Maybe Not”. *Journal of Special Education Leadership* 16 (1), 55-57

RESUME

Ronald K. Felton, MS Ed.
1114 Milan Avenue
Coral Gables, Florida 33134
305-448-8332

EXPERIENCE

January 23, 2005 – Present

CEO, the Bertha Abess Children's Center, Inc. Miami, Florida.

Providing leadership to a Children's Mental Health agency providing services to students with severe emotional and behavioral disorders in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties.

July 1, 2005 – Present

Consultant.

Providing consultancy services to school districts and agencies relative to services to children and adolescents with disabilities. Providing consultancy services to urban school districts through the Urban Special Education Leadership collaborative (EDC, Inc., Boston, MA).

Currently developing the Resource Network for Children with Special needs and their Families for the Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County.

July 1, 2005 – December 30, 2005

Adjunct Professor, Miami-Dade College.

Teaching two undergraduate teacher courses in special education and observing practicum students in the field.

Adjunct Instructor, Florida International University.

Teaching graduate seminar in Special Education Administration.

March, 2003 – June 3, 2005

Associate Superintendent, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for Exceptional Student Education and Student/Career Services, Medicaid Reimbursement Program, Psychological Services, School Choice and Parental Options, Division of Life Skills and Special Programs, Athletics/Activities; and Attendance Boundaries.

August, 1999 – March, 2003

Assistant Superintendent, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for the administration of the Office of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Student/Career Services. Departments included ESE, guidance, psychological services Medicaid reimbursement and career services.

July, 1996 – August, 1999

District Director, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for the administration of all programs for exceptional students in Dade County.

August, 1999 – July, 1996

Executive Director, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for the administration of all programs for exceptional students in Dade County.

July, 1989 – August, 1992

Director I, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for programs for emotionally handicapped/severely emotionally disturbed and autistic. Served as principal of seven non-school based day treatment programs for severely emotionally disturbed students. Responsible for two grant-funded projects: Dade-Monroe Multiagency Network for severely emotionally disturbed and the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System-South (FDLRS-S).

July, 1988 – July, 1989

Supervisor, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for non-school-based programs for the severely emotionally disturbed including the supervision of instructional staff. Responsibilities also include technical support for school-based programs for the severely emotionally disturbed.

July, 1983 – July, 1988

Educational Specialist, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for all aspects of programs for the severely emotionally disturbed including the development of models for classroom and therapeutic interventions as well as teacher training.

August, 1982 – July, 1983

Educational Specialist, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Developed and field tested "Training Parents of the Severely Emotionally Disturbed", a training package produced under a federally funded grant from the Florida Department of Education. The development process included contacts with local community agencies as well as parents of disturbed children.

September, 1981 – August, 1982

Graduate Assistant, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Responsible for teaching graduate seminars and evaluating student teachers.

September, 1980 – August, 1981

Practicum Supervisor, Woodhaven Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Supervised graduate students from Temple University during practicum experiences at a short-term residential institution for the developmentally disabled. Responsible for teaching graduate seminars and evaluating student teachers.

January, 1980 – September, 2003

Adjunct Instructor, Florida International University, Miami, Florida.

Provided instruction and field experience supervision for Behavioral Approaches to Classroom Learning I and II, Advanced Theory of Emotionally Handicaps, Seminar in Special Education Administration.

January, 1979 – December, 1979

Clinical Instructor, Florida International University, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for assisting instructor in graduate and undergraduate and classes in behavior modification. Responsibilities included lectures, testing, supervising field experiences and grading student's work.

September, 1979 – June, 1980

Teacher, Hospital Homebound Program, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Teacher of severely emotionally disturbed adolescents at Highland Park Hospital. Responsible for academic assessment and individualized instruction of students in adolescent psychiatric unit. This included maintaining contact with student's home school, and teachers. Also involved with hospital staff in the development and implementation of treatment plans for students.

June, 1978 – September, 1979

Parent Liaison/Teacher, Home Intervention Parent Program, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for the development of behavioral programs for severely and profoundly handicapped students with behavior disorders. Involved in the training of parents and paraprofessionals in the implementation of programs and behavioral interventions in the home. Assisted families in the accessing of services from community agencies.

March, 1978 – September, 1979

Teacher, Adult Education, Sunland Training Center/Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

Teacher of adults at residential facility for the mentally retarded.

August, 1975 – June, 1978

Teacher of the Emotionally Handicapped, Horace Mann Junior High School, Miami, Florida.

Responsible for academic and behavioral assessment and the development and implementation of individualized educational and behavior management programs. Developed home based reinforcement program and trained parents in the implementation of behavioral programs in the home.

EDUCATION

Graduate Studies (ABD) 1980-1982

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY, Philadelphia, PA.

Major: Special Education

Minor: Counseling Psychology

M.S., Diagnostic Teaching, March, 1978

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, Miami, Florida

Major: Behavior Disorders

B.S. Exceptional Child Education, March, 1975

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, Miami, Florida

Major: Behavior Disorders

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Council for Exceptional Children

Florida Council of Administrators of Special Education

Take Stock in Children Leadership Council

Florida Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

Professional Development Partnership

National Center for Culturally Responsible Educational Systems (NCCREST)

Advisory Board

University of Miami - Mailman Center Consumer Advisory Board

PUBLICATION

Klingner, J.K., Harry, B., & Felton, R.K. (2003). Understanding factors that contribute to disproportionality: Administrative hiring decisions. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*. 16(1), 23-33.

RECOGNITIONS

Landis Stetler Award, Florida Federation Council for Exceptional Children

"Ron Felton – The Superman of Special Education Administrators" CEC Today
November/December 2002.

(http://www.cec.sped.org/bk/cectoday/archives/nov_dec_2002/cectoday_11_2002_02.html)

Appendix B: List of Individuals Interviewed

List of Individuals Interviewed

- Dr. Gail McKinzie, Superintendent
- Dr. Sherrie Nickell, Associate Superintendent for Learning
- Dr. Bruce Tonjes, Associate Superintendent for School-Based Operations
- Hazel Sellers, Board Member
- Bev Brimer, Parent Advisory Council Chairperson
- L. Romine, Advocacy Group, Parent
- Marianne Capozziello, Polk Education Association
- Don Woods, FDLRS
- Jerome Corbett, Senior Director, Specialized Services
- Mark Bablitz, Manager, Juvenile Court Liaison
- Linda Troupe, Director of Student Services
- Sherwin Holmes, Director of Exceptional Student Education
- Pam Stein, Senior Manager, Psychological Services
- Audrey Kelly, Senior Manager, Prevention, Health & Wellness
- Leslie Allore, Senior Exceptional Student Education Manager, Low Prevalence Facilitator
- Lisa Martin, Senior Exceptional Student Education Manager
- Diane Callaway, Senior Exceptional Student Education Manager
- Teri Bronson, Senior Exceptional Student Education Manager
- Nancy Skelly, Senior Exceptional Student Education Manager
- Teri Crace, Senior Exceptional Student Education Manager
- David Lewis, Senior Director of Elementary, Middle and High Schools
- Diana Myrick, Senior Director of Elementary, Middle and High Schools
- Debbie Edmiston, Senior Director of Elementary, Middle and High Schools
- Charlene Brinson, Senior Director of Elementary, Middle and High Schools
- Kathy Curtis, Senior Director of Elementary, Middle and High Schools
- Brenda Kearse, Senior Director for Middle Schools
- Ann Tankson, Senior Director for K-12 Reading
- John Small, Senior Director for Workforce Education
- Carolyn Finch, Senior Director for Magnet, Choice & Charter
- Bill Strouse, Director of Professional Development
- Linda Searcy, Director of Personnel
- Donna Wingard, Director of Teacher Certification
- Judy Butler, Senior Coordinator for Staff Allocations
- Pam Sudzina, Area Specialist Coordinator
- Meryl Chayt, Area Specialist Coordinator
- Beth Phillips, Area Specialist Coordinator
- Doleciea Hearn, Area Specialist Coordinator
- Joanne Stidham, Area Specialist Coordinator

- Sharon Acosta, Area Specialist Coordinator
- Billie Frier, Area Specialist Coordinator
- Norma Hayes, Area Specialist Coordinator
- Jean O'Dell, Special Education Center Leader
- Doris Sanders, Special Education Center Leader
- April Sumer, Special Education Center Leader
- Karen Siegel, Special Education Center Leader
- Donna Swindell, Special Education Center Leader
- Ron Rizer, Special Education Center Leader
- Terry Fields, Special Education Center Leader
- Pam Ashley, Special Education Center Leader
- Lorine Gipson, Special Education Center Leader
- Pat Mackroy, Special Education Center Leader
- Dr. Otero, Alternative School Center Leader for Bill Duncan Center
- Tim James, Alternative School Center Leader for the Don Woods Center
- Steve Cochran, Alternative School Center Leader for ESE BEST Center
- Linda Peterson, Alternative School Center Leader for ESE BEST Center
- William Dawson, Elbert Elementary School Administrator
- Dr. N.E. Roberts, Association of School Based Administrators
- Jill Cheatham, Medulla Elementary School Administrator
- Karen Kemp, Kathleen Elementary School Administrator
- Matt Burkett, Spook Hill Elementary School Administrator
- Mary Crawford, Lime Street Elementary School Administrator
- Ernest Joe, Auburndale High School Administrator
- Mike Young, Mulberry Middle School Administrator
- Deborah Johns, Countywide Lead Staffing Specialist
- Becky Steverson, Lead Staffing Specialist
- Karen Hyman, Lead Staffing Specialist
- Fay Luster, Lead Staffing Specialist
- Nima Pewitt, Lead Staffing Specialist
- Shelly Marvel, Lead Staffing Specialist
- Sharon Alcorn, Lead Staffing Specialist
- Sabrina Mitchell, Lead Staffing Specialist
- Linda Guest, Lead Staffing Specialist
- Pam Stein, Psychologist
- Alvin Jons, Psychologist
- Jim Maxwell, Psychologist
- Kim Martin, Psychologist
- Kris Marone, Psychologist
- Betsy Sargeant, Psychologist
- Annabella Wilson, Psychologist

- David Aranda, School Social Worker
- Donna McDonald, School Social Worker
- Peggy Smith, School Social Worker
- Irene Farrell, Guidance Counselor
- Laquita Johnson-Looney, Guidance Counselor
- Susan Lovell, Guidance Counselor
- Jane-Ann Sarber, Teacher, Sand Hill Elementary
- Mary Stokes, Guidance Counselor
- Barbara Pack, SLD Facilitator
- Barbara Dunn, ESE Facilitator
- Judy Sanders, Occupational Therapist
- Connie Dillard, Exceptional Student Education Teacher
- Lisa Surlles, Exceptional Student Education Teacher
- Deborah Gustin, Exceptional Student Education Teacher
- Edith Roden, Exceptional Student Education Teacher
- Tammy Zipprer, Exceptional Student Education Teacher
- Lindsey Williams, Exceptional Student Education Teacher
- Bonnie Dupree, Inclusion Facilitator, Inclusion Network
- Karen Shetter, Behavior Specialist
- Marieka Allen, Behavior Specialist
- Jackine Woolwine, Exceptional Student Education Support Facilitator
- Brenda Bailey, Exceptional Student Education Support Facilitator
- Kim Speed, Exceptional Student Education Support Facilitator
- Amy Looker, Positive Behavior Trainer, SEDNET Manager
- Katrina Prosser, Positive Behavior Trainer
- Wilma Ferrer, Assessment, Accountability & Evaluation
- Tom Ray & Department Staff, Exceptional Student Education and Student Services Management Information Systems
- Chris English, Exceptional Student Education Network Specialist
- Bambi J. Lockman, Bureau Chief, Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
- Karen Denbroeder, Senior Educational Program Director, Florida Department of Education, Special Programs Information, Clearinghouse, and Evaluation
- Eileen Amy, Senior Educational Program Director, Florida Department of Education ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance-Administration
- Virginia “Ginny” Chance, Program Director, Florida Department of Education, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance- Program Monitoring
- Patricia Howell, Program Director, Florida Department of Education, ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance-ESE Conflict Resolution

Appendix C: List of Documents Reviewed

Documents Reviewed

- Job Duty and Responsibility Descriptions for the Associate Superintendent of Learning, Associate Superintendent of School Based Operations, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resource Services, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, Senior Manager of Exceptional Student Education-Area, Director of Exceptional Student Education, Director of Student Services, Senior Director of Elementary Schools, Senior Director of Middle Schools, Senior Director of High Schools, County-Wide Staffing Specialists, Curriculum/ Behavior Specialist, Teacher Resource Specialist-District Office, School Psychologist, Administrative Secretary, Senior Technician-ESE Budgetary Accountant, Secretary III, Secretary II, Clerk Specialist, ESE Clerk General
- School Board of Polk County 2006-2007 Administration Flow Chart
- School Board of Polk County 2006-2007 Administrative Code of Conduct, Updated by the Student Services Department August, 2006
- School Board of Polk County 2006-2007 Exceptional Student Education County Wide Administration Flow Chart and Exceptional Student Education District Office Administration Flow Chart
- School Board of Polk County 2006-2007 Student Services Administration Flow Chart
- Administrative Department Staff Comparison Chart
- Exceptional Student Education Satellite Offices Staff
- Senior Manager Liaison Assignments for 2006/2007
- List of Principal Supervisors (Senior Directors) By School
- Psychological Services Staff Assignments, 2006-2007
- 2006-2007 Staffing Specialist's Satellite Offices
- Exceptional Student Education Contact Information
- Overview of Department and Services Provided to Schools
- 2005-2006 Exceptional Student Education Race Distribution Report by Gender
- 2005-2006 Student Membership and Disabilities by Racial/Ethnic Category
- 2003-2004 Post School Outcome Data
- 2005-2006 ESE Students Taking Alternate Assessments
- 2005-2006 Number of ESE Students Assigned to Department of Juvenile Justice
- 2005-2006 Manifestation Determination Meetings Held
- 2005-2006 Number of Hours Director Involved in Mediation/Court Hearings
- Days ESE Students Are Not Receiving Academic Instruction by Race
- 2005-2006 Standard Diploma, Special Diploma, and FCAT Waivers Data
- 2002-2005 Kaplan Spell Read Reading Program Data
- January 4, 2007, Email from Sherwin Holmes to David Riley and Sherrie Nickell Regarding Inclusion and SpellRead Information
- August 8, 2005, Polk County Public Schools Mission Statement
- December 20, 2006, Student Services Highlights and Challenges

- Student Support Services and Shared Services Network Projects, University of South Florida
- November 2, 2006, Summary of Student Services Programs & Services
- October 30, 2006 Polk County Public Schools Psychological Services Annual and Evaluation Timeline and Report
- Polk County Public Schools Strategic Plan Progress Report for School Year 2005-2006
- Florida School Indicators Report Suspensions Data
- Florida Department of Education Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services 2006 LEA Profile for Polk County
- School Board of Polk County Staffing Plan for the 2006-2007 School Year, Board Approved April 11, 2006
- Intervention Assistance Team Process Flow Chart
- 2006-2007 Polk County School Board Master In-service Plan
- Power Point Presentation from Norma Hayes, Sherwin Holmes, Morgan Platt, Valerie Lewis and Steven Shaha, "Achieving Significant Gains in Reading: A Five-Component Model"
- Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Agency Order Summaries for January-June 2001, July-December 2001, January-June 2002, July-December 2002, January-June 2003, July-December 2003, January-June 2004, July-December 2004, January-June 2005, July-December 2005, January-June 2006
- Florida Department of Education Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services ESE Program Administration and Quality Assurance: Final Report of Verification Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs in Polk County, January 21-23, 2004
- Florida Department of Education Division of Public Schools and Community Education Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services: Preliminary Report of Focused Monitoring of Exceptional Student Education Programs in Polk County, March 18-22, 2002
- Exceptional Student Education Program of Study, General Procedures, Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (State, District and Classroom), Special Programs
- IEP Step-by-Step Guidelines
- Infused Skills Grid
- IEP Goal Matrix
- Gifted Program Guidelines
- Curriculum Description, including Goal 3 and Sunshine State Standards and Suggested Materials
- Accommodations/ Modifications
- FCAT Accommodations
- Alternate Assessment
- Alternate Assessment Update
- Local Augmentative and Assistive Technology Team Referral Procedures

- Augmentative Communication Strategies
- Community-Based Instruction Definition, Rationale, 2006-2007 Guidelines
- Community-Based Instruction Sample Request Form and Instructional Memo
- Differences Between Community-Based Instruction and Field Trips
- High School Diploma Options for Students with Disabilities
- Florida Diagnostic Learning and Resources System Sunrise Center Information
- Polk County Gifted Education Program of Services
- Request Form for Tutoring Services for ESE Students
- Adapted Physical Education Information
- Intensive Acceleration of Reading Skills Program Summary
- Spell Read Phonological Auditory Training Student Selection for Program 2005-2006 Information and Sample Student Progress Report
- Student Observation Record Form
- Power Point of 2004-2005 New Florida Statutes and Plan for Strategic Implementation of Spell Read P.A.T. in Polk County Public Schools
- Transition and Post-School Outcomes Definition and Information
- 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Grade Student Information on Post-School Outcomes
- Polk County Public Schools ESE School to Work Continuum Flow Chart
- Extended School Year Services for Students with Disabilities: A Guide for IEP and FSP Teams
- Inclusion Brief
- Polk County School Florida Inclusion Network Technical Assistance Request Form
- Inclusive Services Frequently Asked Questions
- Inclusive Services Resources
- Inclusive Services Learning Opportunities
- August 24, 2005, Memo to All Principals From Sherwin Holmes, ESE Director Regarding Inclusive Practices
- Sample Account Balance
- Open Purchase Order Guidelines
- List of Suggested Vendors
- Discipline and the ESE Student Code of Conduct Information
- Positive Behavior Support in our School Frequently Asked Questions and Popular Myths
- Data on School Trained and Implementing Positive Behavior Supports and Inclusion
- 2005-2006 Data on Trainings Held by the Exceptional Student Education Department
- Blackboard ESE Discipline Mandatory Training To Date October, 2006
- Polk County School System Training and Information Presentation On Disciplinary Procedures for Students with Disabilities Receiving ESE Services
- Discipline and ESE Students Guidelines
- The School Board of Polk County Discipline Incident and Action Codes by Race and Sex
- School Board of Polk County Student Incident Reporting Codes
- Discipline for Students Under 504 and IDEIA
- ESE Alternative Education Placement Flowchart and Form

- ESE Recommendation for Expulsion Flowchart and Form
- Ecological Assessment Form
- Functional Behavioral Assessment, Strict Interpretation of IDEA 1997
- Florida Department of Education Summary of the Manifestation Determination Process and Suggested Steps for Determining Manifestation of the Disability
- Proven Effective Classroom Practices
- 1993 Article by Colvin, G., Sugai, G., & Patching, B. "Precorrection: An Instructional Approach for Managing Predictable Problem Behaviors"
- Pre-Correction Checklist and Plan
- Suggestions for Designing More Engaging In-Class Activities and Increasing the Amount of Time Students Spend on Task
- Classroom Incentive Ideas
- 100 Ways to Verbally Reinforce
- Florida Positive Behavior Support Project Proven Effective Classroom Practices
- ESE Pre-K Request for Support Services Form
- September 25, 2006, Email from Amy Looker to Crace, Bronson, Martin, Johns, and Hoffman regarding Pre-K Services
- Information on Related Mental Health Services for ESE Students
- School Based Mental Health Services Form
- District 14 Family Service and Support Process
- Child and Family Service Planning Referral Form
- Mid-Florida Medical Services Authorization for Release of Patient Health Information
- Summary of Records Reviewed and Person Responsible Form
- Polk County Public Schools Request for Support and/or Consultation Form and Process Guidelines
- Polk County Schools Hiring Guidelines
- May 23, 2005, Email from Sherwin Holmes to Skelly, Bronson, Grosse, Martin, and Meeks regarding Hiring Guidelines Chart, Forwarding Email From Laura McCabe, Administrative Secretary, Human Resources Services
- Hiring Process Guidelines
- School Board of Polk County Interview Data Form
- Polk County Public Schools Instructional Telephone Reference Form and Non-Instructional Personnel Telephone Reference Form
- School Board of Polk County Conditional Employment Agreement
- Professional Educator Competency Program/ Alternative Certification Educator Program Step-By-Step Guide
- November 3, 2006, Guidelines for Assigning Reading/Mentor Coaches and Mentoring Teachers to New Teacher Support
- Polk County Schools Professional Educator Competency Program/ Alternative Certification Educator Program Support Team Checklist/Timeline
- Polk County School Board Reading/Mentor Coach Assignment Form
- Polk County School Board Mentoring Teacher Assignment Form

- January 31, 2007, Sample Mentoring Log
- Professional Education Competence Documentation Program Accomplished Practices Checklist
- Polk County Schools Professional Education Competence Documentation Program Annual Completion Form
- July 2006 Polk County Schools Specific Designated Non-Classroom Teacher Position- Group A-Summary Assessment Form
- Polk County Public Schools Administrative Quality Performance Appraisal System Form
- July 2006 Polk County Public Schools Human Resources Services Division District Non-Instructional Assessment Form and Definitions for Rating Performance
- School Board of Polk County Human Resources Services Non-Instructional Professional Improvement Plan Form
- Polk County School District Teacher Induction Program Seminar Policies and Procedures, Revised 2006-2007
- ESE Flow Chart General Information
- 2006-2007 Northwest Area Exceptional Student Education Flow Charts
- 2006-2007 Southwest Area Exceptional Student Education Flow Charts
- 2006-2007 Northeast Area Exceptional Student Education Flow Charts
- 2006-2007 Southeast Area Exceptional Student Education Flow Charts
- 2006-2007 ESE Transportation Request Checklist, Transitioning Students and Retained Students
- ESE Transportation Request Checklist Guidelines
- Area 1-9 Contacts
- Special Education Services Staffing Plan
- Personnel Allocation Appeal Form
- Blue Sheet 06 Sample
- 2006-2007 Unit Projections Worksheets
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities Frequently Asked Questions on Medicaid Waiver Enrollment
- State of Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities Referral Form
- APD Eligibility Criteria Florida Statute 393
- School District of Polk County Exceptional Student Education McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities Letter of Intent Form
- October 27, 2006, Email from Deborah Johns to Allore, Bronson, Callaway, Crace, Martin, and Skelly Regarding McKay
- Related Services for Students with Disabilities
- Essential Classroom Elements for Students with Autism
- Recognizing the Specific Learning Disability Student
- Ways to Help Students with Visual-Perception Problems
- Ways to Help Students with Behavioral/Social Problems
- Ways to Help Students with Organizational Problems

- Ways to Help Students with Memory Problems
- Ways to Help Students with Auditory Perception Problems
- Ways to Help Students with Visual Motor Problems
- Effective Communication for Educational Planning
- List of Available Handbooks, Manuals, and Guides
- Organizations and Information Services
- Websites: Florida Department of Education and Polk County Public Schools
- 2006-2007 Polk County Public Schools Administrative/Professional-Technical/Other Designated Non-Classroom Teachers Individual/Unit Goals Form for Leslie Allore, Teri Bronson, Diane Callaway-Taylor, Teri Crace, Lisa Martin and Nancy Skelly
- Polk County Public Schools Exceptional Student Education Department Summary of Procedural Safeguards for Students with Disabilities, Revised November 2005
- Florida Department of Education Brochure, “Diploma Decisions for Students with Disabilities, What Parents Need to Know”, Revised 2005
- Florida Department of Education Bureau of Student Services and Exceptional Education Division of Public Schools Brochure “Mediation in Special Education, Information for Parents”
- Florida Department of Education 2003 Brochure “FCAT Accommodations for Students with Disabilities”
- Florida Department of Education Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Brochure “Checklist for Students with Disabilities Transitioning to Adult Life”
- Interagency Council for Adult Transition Services and Post Graduate Transition Programs Brochures
- The School Board of Polk County Answers for Parents Brochures on The Staffing Process, The Visually Impaired Program, The Autistic Program, The Hearing Impaired Program, Procedural Safeguards, Specific Learning Disabilities, Orthopedically Impaired and Other Health Impaired Programs
- Polk County School Board Elementary 2003-2004 Brochure, Student Progression (Will My Child Be Promoted?)
- 2006-2007 Polk County Public Schools Information Guide