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In Collaboration With...

Florida Department of Education
My Time for Change

I have some news to share! The 22 years I have spent so far as an educator have been rewarding. I am grateful for the 12 of those years that I have been allowed to contribute at the state level, and especially for the past several years directly with the incredible collection of professionals in the Student Support Services Project. My time at the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has come to a close.

I am careful to honor the “knowing” that I have about when to make a change in my life. I believe that the contributions each person chooses to make to society during his or her lifetime through work is incredibly important, personal and intuitive. With that, I know that it is my time for change so I have resigned from my position with the Student Support Services Project, University of South Florida and Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS).

Before I came to FDOE, and after teaching and leading, I had a thriving five-year independent consultant business. During that time, I worked with many of you in Florida school districts and beyond on improving reading outcomes and instructional delivery techniques for increased student engagement. The creative and independent nature of that kind of work is calling to me again, specific to topics that interest me such as systemic change, health coaching and writing.

Please accept my appreciation for your partnerships and kindnesses over the years. Your encouragements and acknowledgements have accumulated in day-to-day interactions with many of you and with my beloved colleagues with the Student Support Services Project and other BEESS projects. I am especially grateful to Dr. George Batsche, who is our project director and has been my mentor for the past 12 years. Thank you!

During the recruitment process for the project coordinator position with the Student Support Services Project, Anne Glass, the Student Support Services Medicaid Consultant, will stand in as the interim coordinator for our project. For more information about the project coordinator position with the University of South Florida, go to [http://www.usf.edu/administrative-services/human-resources/careers/index.aspx](http://www.usf.edu/administrative-services/human-resources/careers/index.aspx) and select “Browse/Apply Job Openings” from the left-hand menu. The position is listed as Program Director (Job ID 10347).

Please continue the work of integrating student services across school counseling, school social work, school nursing and school psychology, as well as within the multi-tiered system of supports. For more information about how to do this, go to [http://sss.usf.edu/integrated/fissm/Action_guide.html](http://sss.usf.edu/integrated/fissm/Action_guide.html).

Farewell!
Stories From the Field

A College Transition Program

In 2013, Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Valencia College to create a College Transition Program. This program was established to help increase the college attendance rate for graduating seniors, especially for low-income, minority and first-generation college students. Most Florida high schools have a high counselor-to-student ratio, which limits the time that counselors can spend with individual students. Because OCPS is the 10th largest school district in the United States and the fourth largest school district in Florida, OCPS District Superintendent Dr. Barbara Jenkins wanted to ensure that all high school seniors within the district were being guided to complete a postsecondary plan. This partnership was the first step in reaching that goal.

OCPS has 184 schools, 19 of which are high schools. OCPS serves a very diverse population with 68 percent of the students identified as minorities. As minority and low-income students are often under matched in terms of colleges attended, one goal of this program is to support and bring awareness of postsecondary options to low-income, minorities and first-generation college students. Other goals are to increase student acceptance to top universities and colleges in the nation, increase the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rate and decrease summer melt.

Through Guidance and Academic Services, supervised by Mary Bridges, five college transition counselor positions were created to assist the 19 high schools in the district. The transition counselors visit their three or four assigned high schools one day per week from Monday through Thursday. Fridays are used for team collaboration and district meetings.

The MOU between Valencia College and OCPS stated an Advisory Council would be created that would meet monthly. The Advisory Council meetings typically include the OCPS Deputy Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Senior Director and Senior Administrator of Guidance and Academic Services, Valencia College’s Vice President of Student Affairs, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, Director of Dual Enrollment, Director of Postsecondary Transitions and the five college transition counselors. The stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and revised annually to meet the needs of both the district and Valencia College.

...continued
The program’s focus is to provide support that is specific to college readiness and to work with high school students and their families by helping them navigate the postsecondary process. The counselors work with students on career interests, financial aid, dual enrollment and the college admissions process. They also encourage high-performing students to apply to elite colleges and universities across the nation. To successfully accomplish this task, the team collaborates, consults and attends trainings regularly with college and university staff to ensure that they are providing accurate information to OCPS students.

Information is disseminated to students utilizing a variety of techniques and resources. The team uses Remind to send text messages to students at the various assigned high schools. High schools also post information on their social media sites, Edmodo and school newsletters. The team also hosts large-group and classroom guidance lessons, as well as individual appointments and lunch-table presentations to reach students and to provide additional assistance.

The college transition counselors also provide support to OCPS high school counselors. The student-to-counselor ratio in OCPS is roughly 410:1. In addition to their large caseloads, school counselors have been tasked with increasing the college going rate as well as FAFSA completions. This additional support was greatly needed.

As a means of increasing consistency and reducing duplication among schools, a postsecondary plan within the district’s student information system was created to collect and track important data points that are necessary for advising and guiding students. School counselors can record the students’ postsecondary planning, progress and final admission decisions.

At the end of each year, the college transition counselors update the College Readiness and Transitions Annual Report to reflect their accomplishments and challenges. While accountable to their stakeholders and to themselves, the counselors’ main goal was to provide accurate information, opportunity and access to all.

Mary Bridges, Senior Director
Mary.bridges@ocps.net
Carol Bickel, District Lead Counselor
Marlene.west@ocps.net
Academic and Guidance Services
Orange County Public Schools
Orlando, Florida

Hernando County School District Receives Funding for StarFISH Program

The Florida Legislature has provided an appropriation to fund the Hernando County School District’s new Project StarFISH Program for the 2016-17 school year. The project will emphasize early but intense interventions for elementary and middle school students with extensive mental health and sometimes co-occurring behavioral concerns. Project StarFISH will blend both clinical and nonclinical interventions with relevant and rigorous academic instruction to achieve improved outcomes for its students.

...continued
StarFISH Program continued

Project StarFISH will utilize evidence-based instructional programs and therapeutic interventions to facilitate positive academic growth and reinforce appropriate replacement behaviors. Academic, behavioral and therapeutic outcomes will be progress monitored and analyzed to assist in evaluating progress and making data-based decisions. Therapeutic services provided through this project will include individual and group counseling and mental health assessments. Nonclinical services provided will include positive behavioral supports, social skill training, conflict resolution skill development, mentorship, and therapeutic art, music, drama and recreation. Parent involvement and education, as well as community education, will be emphasized and provided in an attempt to support the family and help the students generalize the positive skills acquired across settings.

If you would like more information about this program, please contact the Hernando County School District project contacts: Cathy Dofka, Director of Exceptional Student Support Services, at dofka_c@hcsb.k12.fl.us or Judy Everett, Supervisor of Exceptional Student Support Services, at Everett_j@hcsb.k12.fl.us.

Levy County School District Health Technician Helps Save a Life!

In the Levy County School District, Wanda Johnson, School Health Technician, got involved with a student illness, which has had a life changing impact for the family.

Last month, one of our very athletic and physically fit students came to the health room with complaints of dizziness and shortness of breath while standing in the gym. All of his vital signs were stable except his blood pressure; it was somewhat elevated.

Knowing this student, Mrs. Johnson investigated things further and found out the student had a similar experience recently during a baseball game, and at football practice the previous day. The parent was notified and an appointment was made with his physician.

Since that time, a serious hidden heart abnormality was detected that could have had devastating ramifications. The parent has put the story on Facebook with her sincere gratitude. This student will undergo surgery this summer to fix the heart abnormality and he should be able to return to the sports he loves in a few months.

Mrs. Johnson compiles an Excel spreadsheet that is given to the athletic directors/coaches so they have the latest dates for clearance. She also makes copies for coaches, as they need them for each sport. This allows multisport access for all, and no loss of sport physicals for parents. If there is a student who needs a specialty clearance or has an injury needing a clearance, it complies with those things and keeps the student, school and coaches/personnel safety in check.

I just wanted everyone to know how much our health techs and health staff can really make a difference in our schools!

I feel it is vitally important that health staff at the middle and high school levels are involved with annual sport physicals that are mandated by the Florida High School Athletics Association.

Angie Phillips, RN
Levy County School Nurse
## Concordant Scores for Reading or English/Language Arts Assessment

In order to satisfy the Reading/English Language Arts assessment graduation requirement, a student may use a score of 430 (or greater) on the new SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section or a score of 24 (or higher) on the new SAT Reading test score (Reading subtest). A student may also use a concordant score of 19 on the ACT Reading. Information related to statewide assessment requirements is available on the [Graduation Requirements for Florida’s Statewide Assessments](#) web page.

## Industry Certifications

### Florida’s Students’ Building Blocks to Knowledge and Careers

Industry certifications earned through secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs and courses are an important component of Florida’s public education system, and ultimately prepare students for a variety of careers throughout Florida including many new and emerging science, technology, engineering and mathematics occupations.

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity defines industry certification as follows:

A voluntary process through which students are assessed by an independent, third-party certifying entity using predetermined standards for knowledge, skills and competencies, resulting in the award of a credential that is nationally recognized and must be at least one of the following:

(a) Within an industry that addresses a critical local or statewide economic need;

(b) Linked to an occupation that is included in the workforce system’s targeted occupation list; or

(c) Linked to an occupation that is identified as emerging.

For more information, please contact Sean Friend with the Division of Career and Adult Education at 850-245-9030 or sean.friend@fldoe.org.

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**Did you know...**

Students earning industry certifications with a statewide articulation agreement may earn postsecondary credit hours in designated AS/AAS degree programs.

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Positive Attendance Trends in Florida School Districts

Eight districts were identified to complete a survey on the policies and practices that lead to a decrease in student absenteeism in their school district. Four districts were chosen due to consistently low chronic absenteeism percentage rates across two or more school levels (elementary, middle or high).

The remaining four districts were chosen due to a five percent or greater decline in the chronic absenteeism percentage rates when the 2014-2015 data were compared with 2010-2011 chronic absenteeism rates. In addition, the districts demonstrated a five percent or greater decline across two or more school levels.

The chronic absenteeism data from eight school districts that either made gains in decreasing the percentage of students who were chronically absent (missing 10 percent or more of school days) or those that had consistently low levels of chronic absenteeism were analyzed to determine common trends that may be related to the low or declining rates.

District-level administrators responsible for student attendance were interviewed to gather data on attendance practices. The survey included questions that addressed the districts’ attendance policies, data collection methods and its use, attendance interventions and supports at all school levels, and the roles of district- and school-level personnel. The interview data were analyzed to determine common themes among the districts.

While there is much overlap in the themes that emerged, the frequency and specific types of activities the consistently low chronic absenteeism districts engage in versus the declining chronic absenteeism districts varies. The consistently low chronic absenteeism districts most frequently reported the use of school-level interventions as compared with the use of student services personnel and frequent examination of attendance data by the declining chronic absenteeism districts.

In addition, the consistently low chronic absenteeism districts engaged in practices related to three additional themes that were not reported among the declining chronic absenteeism districts, which may provide information related to contributors of consistently low rates of chronic absenteeism.

### Themes in Order of Most to Least Frequently Reported Activities or Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts With Consistently Low Chronic Absenteeism</th>
<th>Districts With Declining Chronic Absenteeism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-level interventions</td>
<td>Utilization of student services personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent involvement</td>
<td>Frequent examination of attendance data at school and district levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of student services personnel</td>
<td>Parent involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent examination of attendance data at school and district levels</td>
<td>Identified attendance policy procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage of attendance data for problem solving</td>
<td>School-level interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified attendance policy procedures</td>
<td>Usage of attendance data for problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions involving the legal system</td>
<td>Interventions involving the legal system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified existence of an attendance policy</td>
<td>Identified existence of an attendance policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative team involvement</td>
<td>Identified data system used to ensure accuracy of data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>This survey was completed with assistance from Dr. Amber Brundage, Florida Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District-level interventions
FASNating News

The Florida Association of School Nurses produces a quarterly newsletter, FASNating News, to provide school nurses and professional colleagues with information and resources to support the health, learning and well-being of students. Check it out at https://fasn.nursingnetwork.com/page/32951-fasnating-news.

Resource for Parents

Understood is a user-friendly, digital resource for parents of children with learning and attention issues. Understood provides information to help parents understand their children’s attention and learning challenges through articles, FAQs, slideshows, videos and expert chats, and provides tools and resources to help parents support their children. The Parent Toolkit provides personalized resources and recommendations based on the child’s profile, technology resources relevant to the child’s needs and simulations to experience learning and attention issues through the child’s eyes. For a brief overview, watch Our Story. Check out the Understood website at https://www.understood.org and empower your parents by sharing this resource.

Civil Rights Data Collection for the 2013-2014 School Year

A recently released document from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights identifies key data on equity and opportunity. Data from the 2013-14 school year reveal wide gaps in key areas affecting educational equity and opportunity for students, including incidents of discipline, restraint and seclusion, access to courses and programs that lead to college and career readiness, teacher equity, rates of retention and access to early learning. In the Fall of 2016, the public will be able to look up 2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) data for individual schools, school districts and states and generate custom reports/analyses by visiting the CRDC website at http://ocrdata.ed.gov.

High School Feedback Report for 2014 Graduates

FDOE has issued a memorandum regarding this report. The memorandum may be viewed at http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7642/dps-2016-92.pdf.
Office of Special Education Program’s Policy and Technical Assistance

The following memos and letters are noted in the Office of Special Education Program’s (OESP) May 2016 update.

◊ The April 25, 2016, letter to Kelli Unnerstall responds to the writer’s question about whether a school district may identify a child as having dyslexia under the category of Specific Learning Disability.

◊ The April 26, 2016, “Dear Colleague” letter on Children with Disabilities Residing in Nursing Homes focuses on the responsibilities of states, school districts and other public agencies in addressing the special educational needs of children with disabilities who reside in nursing homes.

◊ The April 29, 2016, OSEP Memo 16-07: Response to Intervention (RTI) and Preschool Services was issued to clarify the relationship between RTI and evaluations.

◊ The May 9, 2016, letter to Martha Goodman addresses the question of whether there is a “federal barrier” to the development of an individual educational plan (IEP) for an eligible child whose parent is contemplating whether to choose special education and related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or continue to receive IDEA Part C services when a state has opted to make Part C early intervention services available to children aged three and older pursuant to Section 303.211 of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations.


Every Student Succeeds Act Update and Public Input Plan

FDOE has issued the following memorandum regarding Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The memorandum may be viewed at http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7643/dps-2016-87.pdf.

ESSA Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

FDOE has posted a frequently asked questions and answers document regarding highly qualified teachers on the ESSA website at http://www.fldoe.org/academics/essa.stml. For more information, contact ESSA@fldoe.org.
Upcoming Events

American School Counselor Association Conference

Florida Association of School Psychologists Summer Institute 2016

2016 SUS Admissions Tour
Registration for the 2016 State University System (SUS) Admissions Tour is now open. Visit http://www.flbog.edu/about/cod/asa/admissions_tour.php. Select the location that is most convenient for you. This will lead to the Eventbrite registration page.

Save the Date for AMM 2016
This year’s Administrators’ Management Meeting (AMM) has been scheduled for September 13-15, 2016. AMM will be held at the Renaissance Vinoy Resort and Golf Club, St. Petersburg, and will be co-sponsored by the Florida Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and the Florida Association of Student Services Administrators (FASSA).

A draft agenda and registration information will be released soon.

Did you know...
The four partnership disciplines of Student Services are School Social Work, School Counseling, School Nursing and School Psychology
Trivia Questions

Q-1.
True or False

Utilization of student services personnel is the most frequently used practice or activity for districts with declining chronic absen...