

CEES
Legislative Training
March 20, 2017
Tallahassee, FL

Committee for Education of Exceptional Students (CEES) 2017 Legislative Platform

Safe Learning Environment

- Continue training for all school personnel and enhance university programs in recognition and treatment of abused children.
- Continue implementation of strategies to eliminate all forms of bullying.
- Ensure that discipline decisions relating to students with disabilities are reviewed individually in the context of the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and provide funded training for school-based personnel including School Resource Officers (SRO) to handle specific behavioral concerns in a differentiated manner.
- Prohibit the use of physical restraint in instances other than imminent danger to oneself or others, and provide annual training in the area of restraint and seclusion.
- Replace corporal punishment in all public schools with evidence based alternatives to improve student behaviors.
- Replace out of school suspension and expulsion with appropriately monitored in-school learning opportunities.
- Fund and expand evidence-based practices such as Positive Behavior Supports to decrease occurrence of discipline issues for all students and address inequities related to suspension and expulsion.
- Institute alternatives (e.g., restorative justice programs, on-site personnel who are trained in rebuilding social/emotional skills with at-risk students; collaboration with behavior specialist, social workers and community outreach personnel) in place of using out of school suspension (OSS) and expulsion.

Access and Assessment

- Establish class size requirement for students with disabilities that is consistent with best practices for the delivery model of special education services.
- Provide funding across the spectrum of K-12 services for students who are Gifted, including students who are twice exceptional.
- Ensure that Multi-tier System of Supports (MTSS) is provided to all students based on their individual needs, regardless of their exceptionality.
- Ensure that instructional materials, intervention strategies, and resources are research/evidence based.
- Ensure availability of appropriate and accessible educational materials including digital materials, by using adaptation features, specialized formats, and assistive technology to access the curriculum and to meet state accountability requirements.
- Allow the use of classroom accommodations in all assessments including district and state assessments through the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Remove barriers for students with disabilities in secondary career education and postsecondary programs by allowing documentation such as previous Individual Educational Plans (IEP), 504 Plans, and Summary of Performance (SOP), so that students can access appropriate accommodations.
- Instruments used in high stakes decision-making should be legislatively mandated to be clearly validated for each separate intended use.
- Support valid and reliable Learning Media Assessments (LMA) based on research-based practices for all learners who have visual impairments including those students with multiple exceptionalities.

These issues were determined by the following statewide organizations: Florida Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, Florida Council of Administrators of Special Education, Florida Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders, Florida Council for Exceptional Children, Gatorland Council for Exceptional Children, Florida Association of School Psychologists, Florida Division on Career Development and Transition, Florida Gifted Network.

Funding

- Increase the ESE guaranteed allocation by more than the inflation and population growth, for students including K-12 gifted programs.
- Ensure services to exceptional students in the public schools are not penalized by reallocation of resources that may reduce the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) or ESE Guaranteed Allocation.
- Continue to fund critical statewide infrastructure support programs serving students with exceptionalities:
 - Challenge Grants for the Gifted;
 - Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)
 - Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired (FIMCVI), Critical Initiatives in Visual Impairments, and special funds for the instructional materials needed by students who are visually impaired,
 - Resource Materials and Technology Center for Deaf/Hard of Hearing
 - Multi-Agency Network for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (SEDNET)
 - Very Special Arts Florida (VSA)
 - Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Continue funding for intervention programs such as:
 - Division of Blind Services
 - Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)
 - Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Centers (university programs).

Accountability

- Design performance pay and teacher evaluation systems that measure contributions by ESE resource/itinerant teachers and student services personnel who are working with students across the entire continuum of services (e.g., Value Added Model).
- Teacher evaluation systems for teachers of students with disabilities should consider the specific disabilities of the students the teacher is serving.
- Mandate equivalent academic accountability measures, as required of the public schools, for students with disabilities enrolled in school choice programs such as special savings account funding, McKay Scholarships, Personal Learning Accounts, and ensure fiscal accountability for all services using public funds.
- Eliminate the penalty for high schools that have students with disabilities who may require 5 or more years to meet graduation requirements.
- Examine the penalties for schools and districts related to the legislation for the use of the national cohort formula for drop out rates.

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Personnel

- Protect Chapter 490 licensure for school psychologists and Chapter 491 licensure for mental health counselors, social workers and marriage and family therapists.
- Align teacher certification standards to reflect current research and practice.
- All teachers through university pre-service programs should have “in-field” experience and training in Exceptional Student Education prior to graduating and/or being assigned to a classroom.
- Support disability awareness and training of law enforcement officers in effective communication and de-escalation, and intervention strategies for people with disabilities (e.g., ASD, InD, EBD, LD, mental health & homeless).

Mental Health Services

- Support and fund mental health services for students, which may include wrap around and community linkages.
- Fund and continue to provide professional development opportunities in the area of mental health.