

2015 Consensus items related to the **Education of Exceptional Students**

Funding

- Provide increases to the ESE guaranteed allocation for inflation and growth of 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 FEFP or ESE Guaranteed Allocation.
- Restore funding to the 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) 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); and,
 - Very Special Arts Florida
- Continue funding for intervention programs such as:
 - Blind Babies Program;
 - Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD); and,
 - Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource 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.
- Ensure that all administrators or other personnel conducting evaluations of ESE teachers and/or student services personnel have training in the accepted standards for these professionals.
- Reject attempts to change ESE funding through redirection to individual specialized accounts.
- Mandate equivalent academic accountability measures, as are required of the public schools, for students with disabilities enrolled in school choice programs or through special savings account funding while maintaining recently passed fiscal accountability measures applying to choice programs and ensuring fiscal accountability for all services using public funds.

Personnel

- Establish training options for all teachers, teaching assistants, school administrators, and related services personnel based upon recent legislative mandates concerning exceptional student education.
- Protect Chapter 490 licensure for school psychologists and Chapter 491 licensure for mental health counselors, social workers and marriage and family therapists.
- Review options for licensure of music therapist using current evidence based practices.
- Provide adequate numbers of student services personnel (professional school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, behavior analysts, and educational interpreters).
- Study instructional delivery models and implementation of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to ensure adequate staffing and training for those who are providing and evaluating services.
- Develop teacher certification standards that reflect current research and practice.

These issues were determined by the following statewide organizations: Florida Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired; Florida Association of School Psychologists; Florida Association of School Social Workers; Florida Council of Administrator of Special Education; Florida Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders; Florida Council for Exceptional Children; Florida Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities; Florida Division on Career Development and Transition; Florida Division on Teacher Education; Florida Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Florida Gifted Network; Florida Network on Disabilities; Florida Music Therapy Task Force; VSA Florida.

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Safe Learning Environment

- Establish training for all school personnel and university programs in recognition of child abuse and knowledge of available resources for assistance.
- Continue implementation of strategies to eliminate all forms of bullying.
- Support mental health services for students, including wrap around and community linkages.
- 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 personnel to handle specific behavioral considerations.
- Standardize and refine current data collection concerning restraint and seclusion to better inform practices for all districts.
- Prohibit the use of physical restraint for discipline, non-compliance, or convenience of adults.
- Eliminate the use of corporal punishment in the public schools.
- 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.
- Fund alternative programs to reduce the large number of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement, and keep students involved in the learning process.

Access and Assessment

- Eliminate any possibility that class sizes will be reduced for general education classes by increasing class sizes for students with disabilities, while also insuring that opportunities for inclusion for students with disabilities are not reduced. Specialized program needs of these students demand teacher to student ratios far below the Constitutional caps
- Maintain state statute establishing that students who are gifted have an absolute right to appropriate instruction, and provide appropriate funding across the spectrum of K-12 services, including students who are twice exceptional.
- Increase direct services for exceptional students by reducing recently required paperwork and the number of instructional preparations for personnel working with exceptional students.
- Promote early academic and behavior screening and implement interventions in early school years (pre-K through 3rd grade) with increased access to remedial services for all students who have been retained or are likely to be retained because of state accountability measures.
- Ensure that evidence/research-based data is used in the selection of instructional materials, intervention strategies, and resources.
- Ensure availability of appropriate and accessible instructional materials including online materials, by using adaption features, specialized formats, and assistive technology to access the curriculum and to meet state accountability requirements.
- Utilize student assessment strategies that are empirically sound, and ensure that students with disabilities can demonstrate their proficiency and knowledge.
- Ensure use of appropriate accommodations in all assessments including assessment of state standards and end of course exams.
- Remove barriers to admission for students with disabilities into secondary career education and postsecondary programs by allowing documentation such as a summary of performance to substitute for current assessment requirements.

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