



Committee for Education of Exceptional Students

2020 Legislative Platform

CEES Guiding Principles

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

Committee member organizations share a common concern for improving educational opportunities for exceptional students in the State of Florida.

Platform positions adopted by the Committee are endorsed by all member organizations.

2020 Consensus items related to the Education of Exceptional Students

Safe Learning Environment

- Continue training for all school personnel and enhance university programs in recognition and treatment of students who have experienced abuse, trauma, or homelessness.
- Revisit policies on bullying to include mandatory involvement of student services personnel (psychologist, counselor, social worker, etc.), training of all school personnel, fidelity of implementation, *and procedural safeguards that ensure immediate and effective resolutions.*
- Ensure that discipline decisions relating to students with exceptionalities, or those at risk (IEPs, 504 plans, ELL, etc.) are reviewed individually in the context of their plan and provide funded training for school-based personnel including School Resource Officers (SRO) to handle specific behavioral infractions.
- Ban corporal punishment in all public schools and add evidence based alternatives to improve student behaviors.
- Replace out of school suspension and expulsion with appropriately monitored in-school or virtual 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.

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- 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.
- Mandate policies and procedures for handling the elopement/wandering of vulnerable students with disabilities. (Procedures will be incorporated in each individual building's school safety plan to reduce the risk of student elopement/wandering when the students are within the custody and care of the school district.)

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.
- Mandate the use of Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) for academics and behavior, in all Florida districts so supports are provided to all students based on their individual needs, regardless of their exceptionality.
- Ensure availability of appropriate and accessible educational materials including digital materials, by using adaptation features, specialized formats, and assistive technology students use on a daily basis to access the curriculum and to meet state accountability requirements
- Allow the use of classroom accommodations on a regular basis including assistive technology 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 and not used for mandatory retention.
- Support valid and reliable assessments of Learning Media and Functional Vision based on established and research-based practices for all learners who have visual impairments including those students with multiple exceptionalities.
- Rescind the requirement that parents have to give permission for students to be placed on access points.
- Rescind the requirement that parents have to sign for students placed in separate day school if the students are extremely disruptive to the learning environment.

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Funding

- Increase the ESE guaranteed allocation by more than the inflation and population growth, for students including K- 1 2 gifted programs.
- Ensure services to exceptional students in 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:
 - Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)
 - Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired (FI MCVI), 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 Behavior Disabilities (SEDNET)
 - Very Special Arts Florida (VSA)
 - Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Restore funding for the Challenge Grants for the Gifted.
- 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
- Teacher evaluation systems for teachers of at-risk students (ESE, ELL, poverty, homeless, etc.) should consider the specific population of the students the teacher is serving, as well as the resources available to that school.
- 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.

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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. KEEP
- Align teacher certification standards to reflect current research and practice.
- Support disability awareness and training of law enforcement officers in effective communication, de-escalation, elopement and search procedures, and intervention strategies for individuals with disabilities (e.g., ASD, InD, EBD, LD, mental health & homeless).
- Ensure teachers that come to the education field through an alternative certification program/pathway are obligated to complete the requirements to become a teacher prior to being assigned to work with students with disabilities. Teachers assigned to work with students with sensory impairments should be obligated to complete a formal program in that discipline.
- Mandate initial/ongoing training for paraprofessionals in the area(s) that they will be assigned to support. Keep

Mental Health Services-

- Support and fund mental health services for students, which may include wrap around and community linkages. Senate Bill 7026
- Fund and continue to provide professional development opportunities in the area of mental health. Senate Bill 7026
- Protect Medicaid funding as it relates to mental health, so that students are able to access the necessary services that extend beyond the school setting.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of suicide prevention implementation statewide.
- Mandate universal screening for mental health at all schools across the state.
- Mandate Threat Assessment Teams to be trained to be a part of the team and to work with students with disabilities.
- Mandate government resources be used judiciously to ensure high quality, valuable programs are funded and that results are visible for all to see.
- Mandate legislative policies that require a focus on the positive and productive culture and climate in public schools and early childhood programs, and which include strategies to address bullying, harassment, disproportionate disciplinary practices, and opportunity gaps for those living in poverty and who are children and youth of color.

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- Mandate professional development, mental health intervention, and social and emotional learning.



WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR CEES ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND DEDICATION FOR IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS IN FLORIDA. WE GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR GUIDANCE, SUPPORT AND FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS.

SINCERELY,

THE CEES STEERING COMMITTEE:

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