

Florida CASE Newsletter

Winter 2024

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Anna Jensen

From the Desk of the President

This New Year is an opportunity to reflect on the past and to approach 2024 with purpose, resiliency and zeal! A time to appreciate the love and care given to us and let us not forget our spouses, significant others, and family friends and our precious grandchildren who bring so much joy! U an is excited about all of the possibilities afforded to us and the blessings thereof as we continue to make a difference in the lives of our students.

I am also thankful for each of you as it is an honor to continue to serve you and be of support. I believe that positive attitude, perseverance, relentless motivation and beliefs are essential as we forge ahead. May all the best things in life come your way this year and it be a time of reflection and new beginnings.

Wishing you a year filled with happiness, peace, love and self-care. May every wish of yours get fulfilled in the upcoming year!

Warm Regards,

Dr. Rosalind Hall



Quote of the Month

“Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others”

~Christopher Germer



In Memory of Mary Ann Ahearn

Celebrating the life of an amazing person



Mary Ann served as an educator for over 38 years. She began her career as a teacher in Pennsylvania in 1983 and continued her teaching career in Florida in 1989. In 1990, she began working for FDLRS for the Human Resources Department, eventually moved on to Program Administrator for 19 years where she served as the Administrator, ESE Special Projects for FDLRS. Mary Ann was awarded the Florida CASE Administrator of the Year in 2017. Above all the accomplishments, Mary Ann loved the educators in Florida; always ensuring that we had the latest and greatest information and resources that would enable us to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. She gave tirelessly of her time and words of wisdom to be of support to her colleagues, children and families throughout the state. We have been blessed with her leadership and guidance for over 31 years. Mary Ann is the epitome of professionalism, loyalty, integrity and love and asks nothing in return. She will always be a part of every life she has touched and will be missed immensely ❤️

Please Join me in Welcoming our New BEESS Bureau Chief Alice Schmitges



Alice Schmitges is a leader in the field of special education, with a strong commitment to making a difference in the lives of Florida's students with disabilities. In November 2023, she assumed the role of Chief of the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), following her term as the Administrator of the FDLRS Administration Project, overseeing key initiatives aimed at improving special education services in the state.

Alice's journey in education and leadership is marked by an impressive array of experiences and achievements, demonstrating her unwavering dedication to improving educational outcomes for exceptional students. Her educational career began as a classroom teacher, where she honed her teaching skills and developed a deep understanding of the unique needs of students with disabilities. Her leadership qualities were further recognized when she served as the Program Administrator for the Institute for Small and Rural Districts (ISRD), where she demonstrated her capacity to lead and implement programs that impacted students and schools.

Alice's commitment to excellence is not limited to the realm of education. She is also dedicated to serving her country, as she is a member of the Navy Reserves. She recently fulfilled active overseas duty, showcasing her resilience and dedication to education and military service.

Alice Schmitges embodies leadership skills, strategic thinking, military precision, and organizational prowess. She is known for her compassion and ability to connect with others, including teachers, parents, and administrators, to understand and address their needs effectively!

Welcome our New Members

The Benefits of FLORIDA CASE Membership



The FL CASE Board is excited to introduce you to the incredible benefits of becoming a member of the Florida Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE).

As professionals dedicated to enhancing and improving outcomes for exceptional students throughout Florida, joining CASE opens doors to a breadth of opportunities and resources that will support your professional growth and development and increase networking and collaboration,

There are MANY reasons to join Florida CASE. Did you know??

1- Our members receive discounted rates for attending professional learning conferences. These conferences are renowned for bringing together experts and leaders in the field of special education, providing invaluable insights and innovative ideas that can be implemented in your schools and districts. By attending these conferences, you have the opportunity to learn from the best and stay up-to-date with the latest research and best practices in ESE and student services.

2- As a CASE member, you gain access to a member-only online portal, which serves as a comprehensive resource center. This portal is a one-stop-shop for all your professional learning needs, allowing you to enhance your skills and knowledge at your own convenience. This is perfect for new directors and seasoned professionals that want to enhance their professional expertise.

3- FL CASE members enjoy exceptional networking opportunities. We provide many opportunities throughout the year to connect with other state professionals, exchange ideas, and collaborate on initiatives that aim to improve student achievement.

We invite you to join Florida CASE and unlock a wealth of resources, connections, and experiences that will elevate your professional journey in special education.

Please take this opportunity to grow, learn, and make a difference in the lives of OUR students.

To become a member or to learn more about CASE, please visit our website at floridacase.org or contact Deb Giacalone at debgiacolone@gmail.com for help with a new membership or a renewal.

We look forward to welcoming you into our community of dedicated and passionate leaders.

Florida Legislation 2024 is in full Gear!



SB 7000 builds on the deregulation of public schools. A few highlights that may directly impact exceptional student education include: Allowing prekindergarten instructors 30 days after hire to complete the required emergent literacy courses, specifying that a teacher certified in exceptional student education is considered in-field if he or she is teaching exceptional students in a self-contained classroom (currently, self-contained ESE certified teachers are only considered in-field when teaching Access), and establishing a 10-year renewable professional certificate for teachers rated highly effective in 4 years of the 5-year validity period of their professional certificate. The hope is these changes enable districts to increase success in recruiting and retaining teachers.

Under SB 7000, a proposal has been made to: waive initial subject area examination fees and certification fees for a teacher who holds a temporary or professional certificate in: (a) Exceptional Student Education K–12 and who applies to add a subject coverage in Elementary Education K–6. (b) Elementary Education K–6 and who applies to add a subject coverage in Exceptional Student Education K–12.

No later than December 1, 2024, the Commissioner of Education will be making recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on policy and funding changes to assist in the development and retention of ESE instructional personnel. The commissioner will be considering

- (1) Alternative certification in place of the Elementary Education K-6 certificate as an add-on for personnel certified in exceptional student education.
- (2) Financial incentives, including stipends for teacher education students, loan forgiveness, and instructional personnel salary adjustments and supplements.
- (3) Strategies to encourage high school students to consider exceptional student education, including through pre-apprenticeships and dual enrollment.
- (4) Funding under the Florida Education Finance Program to support school district exceptional student education personnel and programs.
- (5) Innovative staffing, including teacher mentoring and supports for certified personnel responsibilities for case management and for instruction.

CS/SB 7002 removes requirements for school boards to provide and annual report on district guidance services. This report is no longer necessary as district school boards provide the information in their annual Mental Health Assistance Allocation Plan and the Mental Health Assistance Allocation Outcomes and Expenditures Report.

CS/SB 7004 creates an additional good cause exemption from third-grade retention to specify that a parent may determine promotion to grade 4 is in the best interest of the student, provides that students will not be required to pass the Algebra 1 end-of-course assessment and grade 10 ELA assessment to earn a standard high school diploma, and removes the requirement for administration of the common assessment for students in DJJ prevention, residential, or day treatment programs.

Senate Bill 4C and House Bill 3C, removes the cap on vouchers for special needs students in the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities program. This is an attempt to accommodate the 8,000+ students who are on a waiting list for the voucher. This proposal only applies to the current school year. Beginning in 2024-25, the maximum number of students in the voucher program would increase annually by 3% of the exceptional student education full-time equivalent student membership.

Our primary focus should remain fully funding special education after years of grossly inadequate funding by our government. The IDEA Full Funding Act is discussed yearly and our representatives need to know we, as educators, expect their support.

It is of greatest importance to notify your legislators of the priorities upon which you wish them to concentrate their focus. A locator for your local representative can be found here: <https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/findyourrepresentative>

Anna Jensen, Legislative Chair



Dr. Landis Stetler 2023 Scholarship Recipients

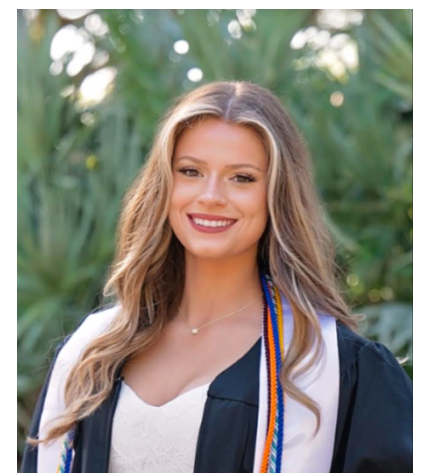
Ms. Cassidy Armstrong



Cassidy is a sophomore at The University of West Florida and is pursuing a degree in Exceptional Student Education and Elementary Education with a minor in Child Welfare. Graduating from high school just last year, Cassidy has already worked as a substitute teacher and is currently serving as an assistant in an ESE Preschool classroom while she works toward her teaching degree. Her interest in working with children with special needs developed while in high school as she volunteered in elementary ESE classes and has also devoted time to the Special Olympics organization. Cassidy reports that she finds the field both rewarding and challenging and that she loves adapting her methods for the individual students she works with. Her colleagues and professors recognize Cassidy's passion for students and refer to her as an impactful leader.

Ms. Shelbey Spratlin

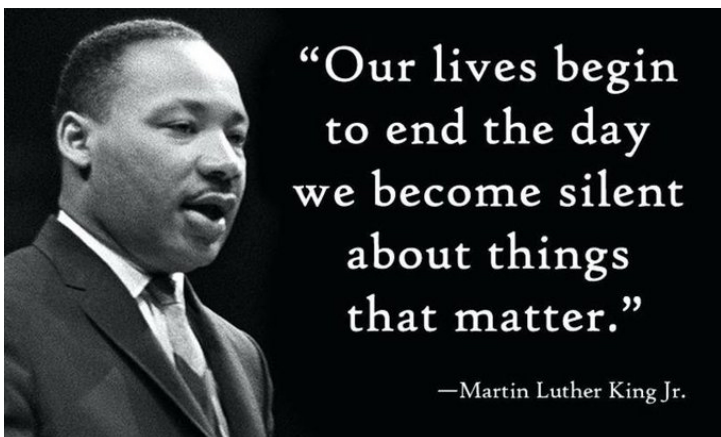
Shelbey is a 2nd year graduate student who is pursuing a Masters in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Florida State University. She is currently working as a Bachelors level Speech and Language Pathologist in Clay County and is a member of several organizations including the American Speech-Language- Hearing Association (ASHA.) Shelbey chose the field of special education and speech/ language therapy because she is committed to making a positive impact in students' lives through improved communication and enjoys the collaborative and innovative nature of the role. Shelbey's professors acknowledge her enthusiasm, motivation, and skill as an emerging Speech and Language professional.



A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Today, we remember the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., an American Baptist minister and activist who played a key role in the American civil rights movement from the mid-1950s until his assassination in 1968. He was a prominent leader who advanced civil rights for people of color in the United States through the use of nonviolent resistance and nonviolent civil disobedience against Jim Crow laws and other forms of discrimination in the United States. King participated in and led marches for the right to vote, desegregation, labor rights, and other civil rights. He oversaw the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott and later became the first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). As president of the SCLC, he led the unsuccessful Albany Movement in Albany, Georgia, and helped organize some of the nonviolent 1963 protests in Birmingham, Alabama. King was one of the leaders of the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, and helped organize two of the three Selma to Montgomery marches during the 1965 Selma voting rights movement. The civil rights movement achieved pivotal legislative gains in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Dr. King’s contributions to the civil rights movement have left an indelible mark on American history and continue to inspire people around the world to fight for justice and equality.





Colleagues ask "What is the IRIS Center?"

The IRIS Center is a national center that aims to improve education outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities, through the use of [effective evidence-based practices and interventions](#) . They provide [free online resources](#) such as modules, case studies, activities, and more, which can be accessed through their IRIS Resource Locator . The center also offers [professional development certificates for educators](#) and a [School & District Platform for school leaders](#) to customize, organize, and track their teachers' ongoing professional development. [Click on the link below for a wealth of information!](#)

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>





floridagovernors.com

Your Board would like to recognize our members for their accomplishments throughout the year. If you receive an award, promotion, special recognition etc...Please send me the information at drrosalind1@gmail.com along with a picture so that we can highlight you in the upcoming newsletter. We take great pleasure in honoring you!



**** FLDCDT "Visions" Conference
April 9-11, 2024
Orlando, Fl.**

****Florida CASE 2024 Summer Leadership Institute
June 10-12, 2024**

****Institute of Small and Rural Districts (ISRD)
June 10-11, 2024**

***Both June events will be held at the beautiful Hyatt Regency
Coconut Point Resort and Spa, Bonita Springs, Florida***

We look forward to seeing you!