



COALITION FOR EDUCATION OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

2009 Legislative Platform

CEES Guiding Principles

A coalition of parent and professional organizations is more effective than individual groups.

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

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

Established in 1972

In these extremely difficult times, please do not balance the budget of the State of Florida on the backs of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students. Specifically we request that you reject any new unfunded mandates that will further erode existing programs and discard any proposals for disproportionate funding cuts to ESE services.

Funding

- Provide increases to the ESE guaranteed allocation for inflation and growth of students including K-12 gifted programs.
- Restore funding of the critical statewide infrastructure support programs for serving students with exceptionalities to the 2000-2001 level:
 - Challenge Grants;
 - Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS);
 - Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired (FIMCVI);
 - Governor's Summer Program;
 - Prekindergarten Handicapped Information Sharing System;
 - Resource Materials and Technology Center for Deaf / Hard of Hearing;
 - Severely Emotionally Disturbed Network (SEDNET); and,
 - Very Special Arts Florida (VSA arts of Florida).
- Increase funding for textbooks for the visually impaired to meet established need for these materials.
- Continue intervention programs such as:
 - Blind Babies Program;
 - Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD); and,
 - Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource Centers (university programs).
- Fully fund all student transportation including costs for gifted programs and expenses associated with orientation and mobility training, community based instruction and job placement services.
- Restrict indirect expenses that may be charged by universities for statewide programs funded by general revenue for providing direct services to K-12 students with disabilities.
- Refrain from passing any new unfunded mandates during the current budget crisis.

Personnel

- Provide greater equity between instructional positions designed to recruit, retain and reward quality educators:
 - Make certain that any changes made to the MAP Plan or any successor program allow fair participation by all instructional personnel including those serving students with disabilities by emphasizing growth and allowing for non-FCAT testing for students where FCAT is not an appropriate test;
 - Allow all instructional personnel and administrators to participate in the 30-day rehire program where both retirement benefits and salary may be earned and include administrators in the expanded DROP program; and,
 - Explore comparability of alternative credentials to the NBPTS for instructional personnel not covered by that organization for the purpose of participating in the Excellent Teacher Program.
- Protect Chapter 490 and Chapter 491 licensure and certification for school psychologists and behavior analysts.
- Restore and enhance the Critical Teacher Shortage Program by restoring funding for the program to include scholarships, tuition reimbursement and loan forgiveness, funding paid internships within critical shortage areas, and supporting additional university faculty in designated critical teacher shortage areas.
- Require specialized training including paid internships or competency demonstration for persons adding subject area certification by exam only and those licensed via alternative certification.
- Provide needed training for teachers and teaching assistants including reading instruction, functional assessment, ESOL, Autism and behavioral interventions.

Access

- Eliminate any possibility that class sizes will be reduced for general education classes by increasing class sizes for students with disabilities when the specialized program needs of these students demand teacher to student ratios far below the Constitutional caps.
- Make certain that state policies do not encourage districts to move away from inclusion for students with disabilities because of state DOE compliance models for computing Class Size Reduction.
- Examine gifted programs to provide appropriate funding across the full spectrum of services K-12 and to maintain current law that students who are gifted have an absolute right to appropriate instruction.
- Increase direct services for exceptional students by reducing paperwork, number of preparations, caseloads and class sizes for instructional personnel working with exceptional students.
- Provide incentives to increase participation by students with disabilities in high school career and technical programs especially those seeking a special diploma and offer appropriate career guidance services for these students including exploring the housing of these programs in age appropriate environments such as vocational technical centers and community colleges.
- Remove barriers to admission and accommodations for students with disabilities into the state's postsecondary schools including current documentation requirements of existing disabilities which is impacting ESE students and disabled veterans.
- Ensure availability of assistive technology and instructional materials in specialized formats for access to curriculum and to meet state accountability requirements.

Accountability

- Enhance interventions provided in early school years and increase access to remedial services for all students who have been retained or are likely to be retained because of FCAT scores especially those who have been retained multiple times.
- Require that the DOE verify the validity of the FCAT for each of the current uses of the testing instrument on a periodic basis.
- Mandate equivalent academic accountability measures for students with disabilities enrolled in school choice programs as are required of the public schools while maintaining all recently passed fiscal accountability measures.
- Study the impact of multiple year retention on student outcomes.
- Take a leadership role in developing Florida's compliance with NCLB requirements.

Safe Learning Environment

- Fund alternative programs to reduce the large number of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, and keep students involved in the learning process.
- Support programs that implement strategies to manage anger, resolve conflict, eliminate bullying and prevent suicide including the Suicide Prevention Office within the Office of the Governor.
- Provide adequate numbers of student services personnel (professional school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, behavior analysts and educational interpreters).
- Support mental health services for students, including our youngest children.
- Encourage alternatives to corporal punishment.
- Promote early screening for all children for academic, emotional and behavioral difficulties, and implement effective interventions for screened students.
- Expand services to students designed to proactively teach social skills and positive character traits to reduce discipline issues.
- Ensure that decisions relating to discipline for students with disabilities are reviewed individually in the context of the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and provide funded training for best practices.

LEGISLATIVE AWARD

To recognize the support of the Florida Legislature, the Coalition annually selects a legislator to be the recipient of the Coalition's Legislative Award. The award is given in appreciation for individual efforts made toward the goal of providing all students with opportunities to reach their full potential. Florida's exceptional students, including those with disabilities and those who are gifted, are the beneficiaries of the leadership exhibited by these recipients.

LEGISLATIVE AWARD RECIPIENTS

2007-08 Representative Steven Precourt

2007-08 Representative Joe Pickens
Senator Carey Baker
2006-07 Representative Joe Pickens
Senator Jim King
2005-06 Senator Evelyn Lynn
2004-05 Representative Ralph Arza
2003-04 Representative Dennis Baxley
2002-03 Representative Bruce Kyle
2001-02 Representative Joe Pickens
2000-01 Senator Richard Mitchell
1999-00 Senator Lisa Carlton
1998-99 Senator Jack Latvala
1997-98 Senator Jim Horne
1996-97 Representative Rudy Garcia
1995-96 Representative Jim Davis
1994-95 Senator Fred Dudley
Senator Bill Turner
1993-94 No Award
1992-93 Representative John Long
1991-92 Representative Tim Jamerson
1990-91 Representative T.K. Wetherell
1989-90 Senator Bob Johnson
Representative Bolley Johnson
1988-89 Representative Sam Bell
1987-88 Representative Tom Gustafson
1986-87 Representative Sam Bell
1985-86 Representative Michael Friedman
1984-85 Senator Carrie Meek
1983-84 Senator Bill Grant
1982-83 Representative Betty Easley
1981-82 Representative Virginia Rosen
1980-81 Senator Clark Maxwell, Jr.
1979-80 Representative Elaine Bloom
1978-79 Senator Curtis Peterson

CEES Board

Diane Johnson, President - Tallahassee
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MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Autism Society of Florida
Family Network on Disabilities of Florida
Florida Association for Behavior Analysis
Florida Association for Education and Rehabilitation of
the Blind and Visually Impaired
Florida Association for the Gifted
Florida Association for Music Therapy
Florida Association of School Psychologists
Florida Association of School Social Workers
Florida Association of Student Services Administrators
Florida Branch of the International Dyslexia
Association
Florida Council of Administrators of Special Education
Florida Council for Children with Behavior Disorders
Florida Council for Exceptional Children
Florida Counseling Association
Florida Division of Learning Disabilities
Florida Division on Developmental Disabilities
Florida Division on Career Development and
Transition
Florida Division of Teacher Education
Florida Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Florida Gifted Network
Florida School Counselor Association
Pioneer Subdivision Council for Exceptional Children
VSA arts of Florida



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CEES Information Specialist:

Bob Cerra
Cerra Consulting Group, Inc.
206 South Monroe Street, Suite 104
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(850) 222-4428
bobcerra@comcast.net