

A Legislative History of Florida's Exceptional Student Education Program

- 2011 Access requirements to postsecondary education for individuals with intellectual disabilities changed with the amendment of section 1004.015, Florida Statutes, to allow reasonable substitutions for entry, admission to a program of study, and graduation requirements, as is currently provided to other students with disabilities.
- 2010 The Florida Consortium project received federal funding to expand three existing transition programs for students with intellectual disabilities at institutions of higher education in Florida.
- 2009 President Obama's Agenda from the White House continued to include civil rights, disabilities, education, family, health care, poverty, and technology among its top 20 topics.
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided a stimulus to the nation's economy, greatly benefiting education.
- 2008 Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act amended.
- Expanded eligibility for Pell Grants and other need-based aid for students with intellectual disabilities to pursue postsecondary education.
 - Created new program to expand the number of postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities.
- Secondary Transition Discretionary Projects reorganized to form Project 10: Transition Education Network to build capacity by providing regional transition representatives.
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- Disability history and awareness instruction weeks established during the first two weeks in October.
- Annual review of high school students' ePersonal Education Plan required.
- Terminology related to students with disabilities updated.
- "Emotional or behavioral disabilities" replaced "emotionally handicapped."
 - "Serious emotional disturbance" removed as a separate program.
 - "Intellectual disabilities" replaced "mentally handicapped" and "mental retardation."
 - "Autism spectrum disorder" replaced "autism" and "autistic."
 - "Students with disabilities" replaced "students with handicapping conditions."
- Window of Opportunity Act directed the Department of Insurance to negotiate a compact for insurance coverage and access for services for persons with developmental disabilities.
- Steve A. Geller Autism Coverage Act created to cover diagnostic screening, interventions, and treatment as prescribed by treating physician for children with autism spectrum disorders.



K–20 education performance accountability system to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Florida Alternate Assessment (reading, language, math, and science) administered statewide.

Health care transition services task force for young adults with disabilities created.

Governor's task force on autism spectrum disorders created.

Jeffery Johnson Stand Up for All Students Act created to prohibit bullying and harassment of students.

Final regulations for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) published.

Florida entered into coordinating agreement with National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center.

Florida represented on the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities.

Barack Obama was elected the 44th President of the United States of America on November 4, 2008. The Obama-Biden platform included civil rights, disabilities, education, family, health care, poverty, and technology.

Sunshine State Standards adopted for science included access points for students with disabilities.

2007

Road to Independence Program opened to students in the foster care system who finish school before they age out of foster care.

Florida Alternate Assessment field-tested.

Portal to Exceptional Education Resources, the statewide electronic individual educational plan, available to districts.

Governor's Commission on Disabilities created.

Children and Youth Cabinet created.

Sunshine State Standards adopted for reading, mathematics, and language arts include access points for students with disabilities.

2006

Development of an electronic statewide individual educational plan system required.

Florida School for the Deaf and Blind authorized to expand outreach services for children with sensory impairments, birth through 5, upon request of school district.



Development of an alternate assessment tool to measure skills and competencies in the Sunshine State Standards for students with disabilities is required.

Middle school promotion requirements revised to include completion of a personalized academic and career plan for students during 7th or 8th grade.

Eligibility for John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program revised to require on-site direct contact hours with teachers.

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) directed to study Gifted program.

Doctoral degree required for licensure as audiologist.

Interagency Services Committee for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities created.

Federal National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards published.

2005

Districts prohibited from requiring a student to be prescribed or administered psychotropic medication as a condition of receiving educational services.

Self-administration of emergency medication for students with life-threatening allergies authorized.

Seventh Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities site authorized.

2004

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA) reauthorized.

Florida's Part B State Performance Plan for 2005–2010 (20 indicators) required.

Annual audits of accounts/records of the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind required.

Florida School for the Deaf and Blind required to comply with all laws and rules applicable to state agencies.

Florida became the first state in the nation to require self-determination instruction or information for students with disabilities.

2003

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) waiver for students with disabilities for whom it is determined that FCAT cannot accurately measure student's ability allowed.

American Sign Language courses required to be accepted as foreign language credit for high school graduation.

2002

Home rule districts allowed to establish Council on Children's Services.

Vocational Rehabilitation transferred to the Florida Department of Education.

Revision of school code completed.

Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed into law.

2001

John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Program established.

2000

Study on children with developmental delays authorized.



School Readiness Program established.

Blind Babies Program established.

Expenditure requirement for exceptional student education increased to 90 percent.

Scholarship program for students with disabilities piloted.

Screening for visually impaired required.

1999

Course description for Supported Competitive Employment developed and approved.

1998

Statewide initiative implemented to expand self-determination instruction for students with disabilities.

Mental health treatment and services authorized.

Exceptional student education supplemental funding established.

Exceptional student education eligibility categories reduced to 11.

1997

Charter schools established.

Revised funding model (Matrix of Services) implemented statewide.

School Medicaid Match implemented.

Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act amended.

1996

Autism centers transferred from Developmental Disabilities Services to Public Education.

Fifth Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) site authorized.

Exceptional student education program review and 15 percent enrollment cap established.

1995

Public record initiatives developed.

Early Intervention Program revised to include disabled.

Prader-Willie syndrome added to definition of developmental disability.

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council transferred from the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services to nonprofit corporation.

Access to Medicare funds maximized.

1994

Special Diploma Option 2, based on employment and community competencies, developed and approved.

Juvenile Justice Education Programs established.

Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services involved in hearing programs.

1993

Special Olympics license plate authorized.

Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities established.

State enforcement of accessibility requirements mandated.

1992

Exceptional student education definition revised.

1991

School day for prekindergarten defined.

Definitions of exceptional and related services revised.

Profoundly handicapped included as eligible for special diploma.

Florida Council for Hearing Impaired revised.

Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Disabilities (SEDNET) advisory board reauthorized with revisions.





Telecommunication changed from Florida Council for Hearing Impaired to Public Service Commission.

Supported employment projects funded for statewide implementation.

Occupational therapy aides authorized.

Districts to provide information about the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind.

Mental health impairments included in special hospital and homebound funding.

Speech pathology and audiology licensing shifted from the Florida Department of Education to the Department of Professional Regulation.

Participation in early intervention programs for preschool children with handicaps authorized.

Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act created (as an amendment to the Education of All Handicapped Children Act).

1989

Definition of at-risk students revised.

Prekindergarten handicapped programs mandated.

Adult education cost factor for handicapped established.

Graduation rate calculation revised to include special diploma and certificate of completion.

Adjustment established for special class in home and hospital setting.

First Start program established.

1987

Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) responsibilities expanded to include technology.

Transition Services Projects funded to implement supported employment for secondary students with significant disabilities.

1986

Postsecondary exemptions established for certain exceptional students.

\$1,000,000 authorized for prekindergarten facilities for handicapped.

Review of Florida Council for Hearing Impaired conducted.

1985

Telephone connection service added to Florida Council for Hearing Impaired.

1984

Profoundly handicapped supplement established.

Contractual arrangements with non-public schools authorized.

Cost categories for speech and deaf revised.

1983

Florida Council for Hearing Impaired established.

Governors Council for Handicapped Concerns created.

1982

Revised definitions: “retarded” to “handicapped,” “crippled” to “physically handicapped,” etc.

Program for Hearing Impaired Infants established.

Profoundly handicapped category authorized.

Pilot program for children with disabilities below age 3 established.

1981

Challenge Grant Program for gifted created.

Educational centers for gifted authorized.

Severely Emotionally Disturbed Network (SEDNET) authorized; later renamed Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Disabilities.

Florida Education Finance Program Cost Factor Study authorized.

Access to public buildings for physically handicapped mandated.

1980

Competency in exceptional student education for teaching certificate required.

1979

School districts responsible for education in Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services residential care facilities (exceptions: Okeechobee and Jackson).

For more information about changes through 1979, read *State Policy for the Education of Exceptional Students in Florida* by Dr. Wendy Cullar, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Florida, 1981.



1978



Combined the Florida Learning Resources System and the Regional Diagnostic Resources Centers to create the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System.

Provisions for assessment and special diploma modified.

Special funds designated for visually handicapped.

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Handicapped services extended to people with specific learning disabilities and people who are physically handicapped.

Socially maladjusted category deleted from exceptional student education.

Full-time equivalent cap placed on part-time students with specific learning disabilities.

Instructional Materials Center captioned films.

Federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act amended to provide funding for children ages 3–5.

1977

State Plan questioned on general supervision.

State Plan questioned on supervision of other agencies.

Profoundly handicapped programs mandated.

1976

Multidistrict facilities funded (3 years at \$9,000,000/year).

1975

Gifted programs mandated.

Number of Regional Diagnostic Resources Centers increased to 18.

Federal Education of All Handicapped Children Act enacted.

1974

Part-time category changed from 7 to 12 hours.

Profoundly retarded category to be phased in over 4 years.

Sixteen Regional Diagnostic Resource Centers authorized.

1973

Florida Education Finance Program became effective in 1973–74 school year

- Changed from unit concept to full-time equivalent concept.
- Changed wording from “children” to “student.”

Programs for certain “handicapped students” below age 3 became available.

1972

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Handicapped authorized.

Florida Learning Resources System established through a federal grant.

1971

Health and Rehabilitative Services required to establish education programs.



Special legislative session results in five year plan for an exceptional student education program mandate:

- Unit increase \$500+ per year for 5 years = \$4,398,320
- Facilities \$4,000,000 per year for 5 years
- Scholarships \$227,000 (inservice)
- State Staff \$54,000
- Research \$100,000

Program changes:

- Gifted, trainable mentally handicapped, and specific learning disabilities added to definition of exceptional student
- Special services redefined
- Thirteen consecutive years of instruction, beginning with kindergarten, required by 1973
- Exceptional children incorporated into many laws
- Exceptional student education program permitted for students as young as 3 years old
- Districts authorized to cooperate with adjoining districts and contract with non-public schools

1967

Children’s Psychiatric Unit at University of Florida at Shands established
Teacher walkout occurs.

1963

Out-of-Field Scholarship Bill passed.

Large print book purchases funded.

Cooperative agreements with Division of Vocational Rehabilitation authorized.

By 1960...

Florida’s Program for Exceptional Children was established but severely under funded There were the following:

- The Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind in St. Augustine
- Sunland Training Center in Gainesville
- Children’s Program at South Florida State Hospital

Exceptional child funding “units” were established as part of the Minimum Foundation Program.

Student enrollment was beginning to reflect the most rapid growth in the history of the state.

- In 1960, there were 937 teachers for 52,881 students.
- In 1988, there were 14,330 teachers for 307,281 students.

Vocational, exceptional, and kindergarten funding units were frozen for two years.

Before 1960...

- 1947 Beginning of the Exceptional Child Program with funding through the Minimum Foundation Program.
- 1945 School districts permitted to serve children who are “educable mentally retarded.”
- 1941 School districts permitted to serve “physically handicapped children.”
- 1926 First special education class in Jacksonville opened.
- 1915 Children with mental and physical handicaps exempted from the new compulsory attendance law.
- 1889 Local vs. state control issue fought.
- 1874 A child find system was created providing 3 cents for each child, age 4–21, identified as deaf/blind and “idiots”; “deaf/mutes” added later.



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