



Exceptional Student Education

Where Every Child Can Learn

Levy County Public Schools

*“Let us think of education
as the means of developing
our greatest abilities.”*

John F. Kennedy

“Our best chance for happiness is education.”

Mark Van Dorn



*Working hand
in hand with you
to help your child
realize his or her
goals and prepare
for life after school.*



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Dear Parents:

We hope this information will familiarize you with the services and procedures of Exceptional Student Education (ESE). As parents, you are a very important part of the process of planning and delivery of special services that will help your child achieve his or her individual goals.

Our staff of dedicated professionals welcomes you as a teammate in this most important endeavor, the shaping of your child's future.

Please feel free to call us with your questions and concerns. For your convenience, contact numbers are located in the pocket of this folder.

ESE Staff
Levy County Public Schools

Providing educational opportunities for all students to develop to their fullest potential in an environment that is safe and conducive for learning.

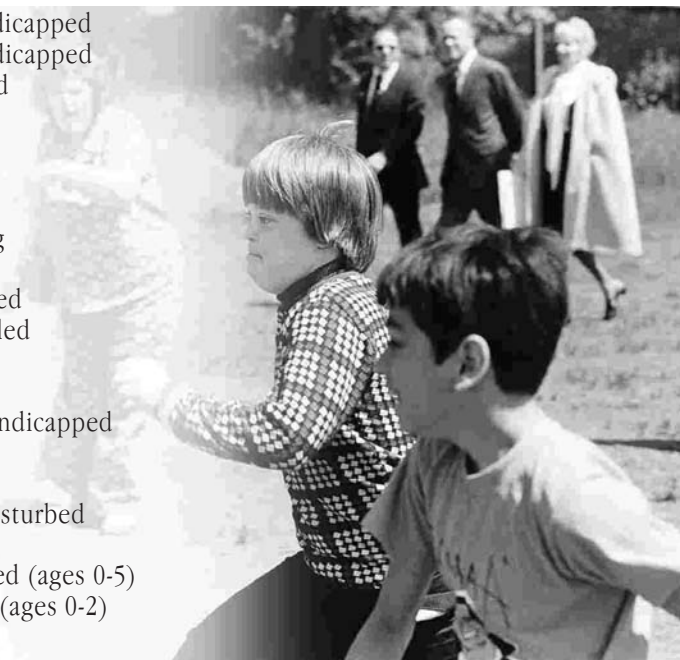
Mission — Levy County Public Schools

Exceptional Student Education

Levy County has approximately 1,800 exceptional students enrolled in its public schools. An exceptional student is one who has special learning needs. The special assistance received in school is called Exceptional Student Education, ESE, or Special Education. Our goal is to provide every exceptional student with a free appropriate public education (FAPE), help them progress in school, access the general curriculum, and prepare for life after school.

Once a student becomes eligible for ESE services under at least one of the following exceptionalities, his or her Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for disabilities, or Education Plan (EP) for gifted is developed.

Educable Mentally Handicapped
Trainable Mentally Handicapped
Orthopedically Impaired
Occupational Therapy
Physical Therapy
Speech Impaired
Language Impaired
Deaf or Hard of Hearing
Visually Impaired
Emotionally Handicapped
Specific Learning Disabled
Gifted
Hospital/Homebound
Profoundly Mentally Handicapped
Dual-Sensory Impaired
Autistic
Severely Emotionally Disturbed
Traumatic Brain Injured
Developmentally Delayed (ages 0-5)
Established Conditions (ages 0-2)
Other Health Impaired



F.A.P.E. (Free Appropriate Public Education)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires all U.S. school districts that receive federal funds to provide a free appropriate public education for all children ages 3 through 21 with disabilities.

The term "free appropriate public education" means regular education, special education, and related services that:

- A. have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge;
- B. meet the standards of the state educational agency;
- C. include an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school education in the state involved;
- D. are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required under Section 614(d). [Section 602(8)]

How Are Students Identified

Parents, guardians, school personnel, doctors, or public agencies that suspect a child may be delayed in normal development may contact **Child Find**, a FREE service of the Levy County Public Schools, Department of Exceptional Student Education, and the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS). Child Find is available to locate and assist children in the community who may need special help in one or more areas of development. Child Find services are provided to all families without regard to income. If needed, an informal assessment (screening) will be conducted. The child may be referred to community early intervention programs such as: Developmental Evaluation & Intervention, Childhood Developmental Services, and/or the Levy County School Board Pre-K Exceptional Student Education programs. Where appropriate, other community resources are also suggested to the parents.

Serving Children Birth to 5

Levy County serves infants and toddlers from birth to age 3, and preschoolers 3-5, with established conditions or developmental delays. Established conditions include the following diagnoses: genetic and metabolic disorders, neurological abnormalities and insults, severe attachment disorder, and significant sensory impairments. Eligible children also include those whose development is delayed in one or more of these areas: communication, cognition, physical/motor (including vision and hearing), social or emotional, or adaptive development.

How Are Students Served

Students under the age of 5 are served in a variety of ways depending on parent/guardian preferences and committee recommendations. A child can receive services at home, or in a classroom setting.

K-12 students have a variety of service delivery models including consultation, support facilitation, co-teaching, resource room, or self-contained.

To refer a child to Child Find contact:

FDLRS (Florida Diagnostic and
Learning Resources System)

To refer or discuss a child K-12 contact:
your school or

Levy County Public Schools
Exceptional Student Education Department

Contact information is listed in the
pocket of this folder.

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Procedures for Referral for a Disability

(school age students)

A student may be referred for screening or evaluation if parents and/or teachers suspect a child may have a disability affecting the student's progress. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide information to better meet the student's educational needs.

If a student is experiencing difficulty in the areas of speech, language, academics, behaviors, or motor skills, the teacher begins trying different materials and methods. Parent conferences regarding the problem of concern are held and documented. An Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) may be developed by the school.

Prior to any testing, parents are contacted by the guidance counselor to obtain written consent for individual evaluation. If a screening shows that further testing is needed, information is sent to the school psychologist who will administer a complete evaluation.

Once an evaluation is completed, parents are invited to school for a meeting called a "staffing." During this meeting, the evaluation is reviewed, and it is determined if the student meets the criteria to be considered eligible – or qualifies – for an exceptional program.

If the student does meet eligibility criteria for an area of disability, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed to address the student's needs.

If the student meets gifted eligibility criteria, an Educational Plan (EP) is developed to address the student's needs.

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Individual Educational Plan (IEP)/Educational Plan (EP)



Every child identified as needing special educational services due to a disability has an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) developed. The IEP is a written plan that describes the student's strengths, weaknesses, and educational needs. It describes who is responsible for providing the student's education and the location of these services. The IEP committee consists of the following participants: parent/guardian, exceptional student

education teacher, regular education teacher, and a program/staffing specialist who serves as the LEA (Local Educational Agency) Representative. The guidance counselor and principal may attend and at the discretion of the parent or agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate may be invited. In many situations, students attend their IEP meetings. The IEP is updated at least annually and more frequently if needed.

Every child identified as being in need of a gifted program has an Education Plan (EP) developed. Usually, EPs are developed every three years, but can be reviewed more frequently if needed. Parents are invited to EP meetings.

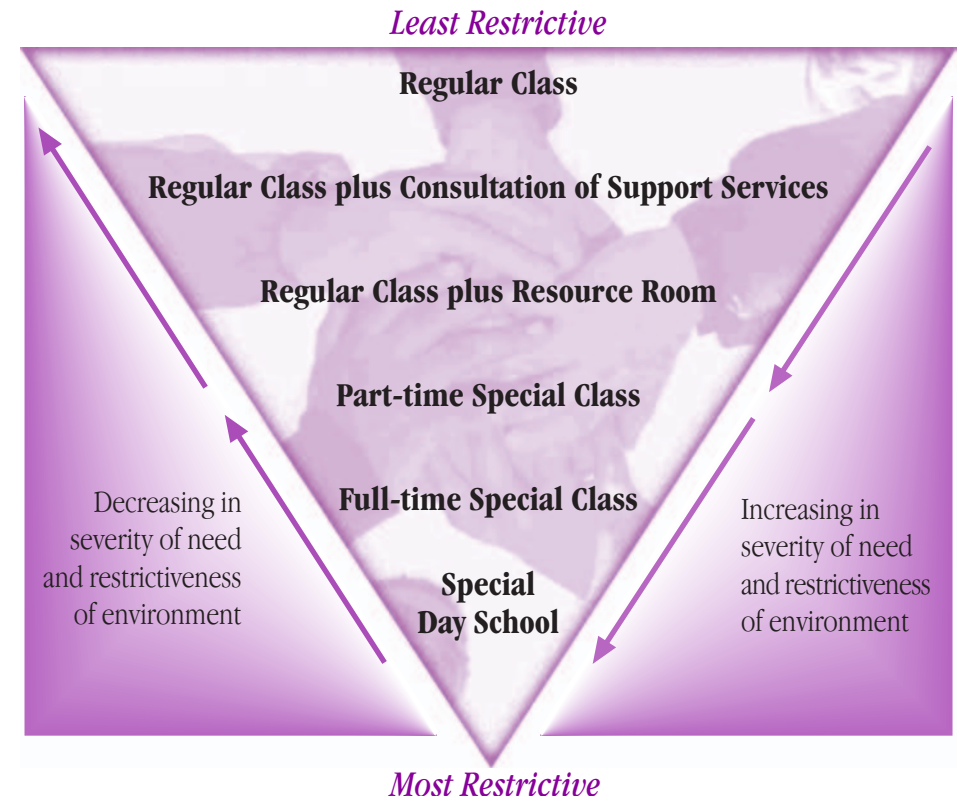


Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

The Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires that: to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Students with disabilities are placed in the "least restrictive environment" to provide opportunities to participate with students in regular education for academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities to the extent appropriate to meet his or her needs. Adjustments in teaching techniques, materials, and/or equipment may be necessary to ensure the best education possible for a student with an exceptionality.

Continuum of Services



Curriculum



The Levy County Curriculum is aligned with Florida's Sunshine State Standards. Students with disabilities complete the same coursework as students with no disabilities to the extent possible.

All students in grades 3-10 are given the opportunity to participate in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). ESE students may require accommodations and the IEP committee will determine what accommodations are most appropriate.

Some ESE students are unable to complete the regular education coursework and cannot take the FCAT. Those students participate in an alternative curriculum, and Alternative Assessment, which is aligned with Florida's Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma.

Problem Solving

From time to time, parents and the school may disagree about a child's ESE program placement, or discipline issues. If at all possible the best way to a resolution is with the school. The appropriate steps to solve problems are as follows:

First, speak with your child's teacher to try and resolve the problem. If an agreement is not reached,

- speak with the ESE specialist to schedule a conference or speak to the principal. If an agreement is still not reached,
- contact the school's district ESE coordinator, or ESE director at the ESE district office.

If a solution to the problem is not found, you may request mediation or a due process hearing. The director of Exceptional Student Education administers all requests for mediation and due process proceedings.

Mediation

As a parent, you have the right to participate in mediation with the school district as an informal way to resolve disagreements between you and the district. The Florida Department of Education makes mediation available at no cost to you or the school district.

- Mediation may be used to resolve disagreements relating to the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to your child, or whenever a due process hearing is requested.
- Mediation is voluntary for both parties.

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- Mediation is conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator who has been trained in effective mediation techniques.
- Mediation shall be scheduled in a timely manner and shall be held in a location that is convenient to both parties.
- Mediation is confidential so that discussions which occur during the mediation process may not be used as evidence in due process hearings or civil proceedings.
- Mediation shall not be used to deny or delay your right to a due process hearing, or to deny any other rights afforded to you.

Any agreements reached during the mediation will be put in writing and signed by both parties. The parties may be required to sign a confidentiality pledge prior to beginning the mediation.

A list of qualified and impartial mediators is maintained by the Florida Department of Education, and mediators are selected from that list on a rotating basis. Mediators may not be employees of school districts or other agencies which provide educational services to students with disabilities; however, a mediator is not considered an employee of a school district or other agency just because he or she is paid to serve as a mediator.

Hearings

If at any time, you cannot come to an agreement with the school district regarding your child's education, you and the school district have the right to ask for an impartial hearing. A hearing may be held on any matter relating to the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to your child.

The hearing will be conducted for the Florida Department of Education by an impartial administrative law judge from the Division Administrative Hearings in accordance with the applicable Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules.

To obtain a hearing, you must provide a written request for a due process hearing to the director of Exceptional Student Education. The school district office has a form you can fill out regarding your request for a hearing. You can use this form to provide the following information:

- the name of your child
- the address where your child lives
- the name of the school your child is attending
- a description of the problem(s) you are having with the district, including the facts relating to the problem(s)
- a proposed solution to the problem(s)

A district may not deny or delay your right to a hearing even if you fail to provide this information or use the form.



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Independent Educational Evaluation



If you do not agree with the evaluation provided by the school – that is, if you do not think they gave the appropriate tests or reached the correct conclusions – you have the right to request that an independent educational evaluation be conducted at public expense. An “independent educational evaluation” means that a qualified person who is not an employee of the school district will test your child. “Public expense” means that the school district either pays for the full cost of the evaluation or ensures that the evaluation is otherwise provided at no cost to you. If you request that an independent educational evaluation be conducted at public expense, the school district, without unnecessary delay, must either initiate a due

process hearing or ensure that an independent educational evaluation is provided at public expense.

If you request an independent educational evaluation at public expense, the school district may ask you for the reason you object to the district’s evaluation; however, you are not required to give a reason, and the district may not unreasonably delay its response to your request.

Diploma Options

Florida offers three different diploma options for ESE students.

Standard Diploma: Students must meet all regular education requirements, which include passing the FCAT.

Special Diploma Option 1: Students must meet some academic as well as vocational requirements. Special programming includes CBVT (Community-Based Vocational Training), CBI (Community-Based Instruction), and OJT (On-Job Training).

Contacts

LEVY COUNTY SCHOOLS

- **Bronson Elementary (BES)**(352) 486-5281
- **Bronson Middle/High (BMHS)** 486-5261
- **Chiefland Elementary (CES)** 493-6040
- **Chiefland Middle (CMS)** 493-6025
- **Chiefland High (CHS)** 493-6000
- **Cedar Key (CKS)** 543-5223
- **Hilltop** 486-5525
- **Forestry Youth Academy** 486-5497
- **Joyce Bullock Elementary (JBES)** 528-3341 / 6693
- **New Path Academy** 486-5346 / 5410
- **Williston Elementary (WES)** 528-6030
- **Williston Middle (WMS)** 528-2941
- **Williston High (WHS)** 528-3542
- **Yankeetown (YTS)** 447-2372
- **Whispering Winds Charter (WWCS)** 490-5799
- **Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS)**Toll Free (800) 533-0326
.....FAX 591-4304
- **School Board Main Office – Superintendent** 486-5231
.....FAX 486-5237
- **Exceptional Student Education (ESE)** 486-5240
.....FAX 486-5242
- **Transportation** 486-5252 / 3328
.....FAX 486-5253

Transportation

Bus transportation is provided at no cost to all students who live more than two miles from their assigned school. Special transportation is provided for students in exceptional education programs, regardless of the distance from home to school, if the IEP indicates:

- Medical equipment requirements
- Medical condition requiring a special transportation environment per physician's prescription
- Aide or monitor required
- Shortened school day
- Assignment to school out of Levy County



Extended School Year - ESY

Extended School Year (ESY) is a program that provides exceptional education services during the summer break to eligible ESE students with disabilities. The decision about which exceptional students are eligible for ESY is made on an individual basis at an IEP meeting. The meeting consists of parents, teachers, therapists, a local educational agency designee, and students as appropriate.

ESE Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)

The ESE Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) in Levy County has been in effect since 2003. The ESE Parent Advisory Committee's mission is to create equitable educational opportunities which will provide all students with the opportunity to reach their fullest potential, gain acceptance, and become productive community members through parent, school and community partnerships. The committee meets quarterly. The ESE Parent Advisory Committee shares information regarding laws and regulations in Exceptional Student Education and resources and programs in Levy County. Conference opportunities and parent training needs are important and are discussed at PAC meetings. It is vital that we work together as partners in educating our students.

PARENTS + EDUCATORS = AN EXCEPTIONAL TEAM

McKay Scholarship

As a parent of a child with disabilities, you have an intensified interest in ensuring that your son or daughter receives a quality education. To be considered for a McKay Scholarship, your child must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), and must have attended a local public school during the last school year. If you believe that he or she is not progressing adequately in the current public school, you may:

- Request that your child attend another school in your district
- Request that your child attend another public school in an adjacent district OR
- Receive a scholarship for your child to attend a participating private school.

The amount of the scholarship will be equal to the amount of funding the student generated in the public school system or the amount of the private school's tuition and fees, whichever is less.

For further information regarding public school options for your child's education, please contact your local school board office and ask for information on the McKay Scholarships Program. If you wish to pursue private school options, please access information at www.floridaschoolchoice.org and click on John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program. You may also call the Florida Department of Education Choice Office Parent Information Line at 1-800-447-1636.

