FILRS Parent Services
News & Information
For Parents and Caregivers of
Students with Disabilities

January 2022

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR LIFE

Bureau of Exceptional Student Education

The Bureau of Exceptional Student Education (BESE) administers programs for students with disabilities. Additionally, the bureau coordinates student services throughout the state and participates in multiple inter-agency efforts designed to strengthen the quality and variety of services available to students with special needs. To learn more about topics of special interest or State and Federal laws, visit Exceptional Student Education (fldoe.org).

BSE Contacts: Staff Contacts (fldoe.org)

Parent Survey: Exceptional Student Education

Each year the Florida Department of Education distributes the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Parent Survey as a way to get statewide input from parents of students receiving ESE services. The questions that make up the survey describe different ways that schools help parents participate in their child's education. Traditionally survey’s are available in the spring and families are notified through Parentlink. To view previous year’s parent survey results visit, Exceptional Student Education Parent Survey (fldoe.org).
Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) Parent Services is now accepting nominations for the 23rd Annual Excellence in Action Awards which will be presented in May 2022.

The Excellence in Action Awards (EIA) were established for parents to recognize individuals who have made a difference in the life of their child with special needs who receives Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services. Over the last 22 years, family members and students, have been inspired to submit hundreds of nominations for administrators, teachers, support staff, transportation staff, therapists, community members, and volunteers who have touched their lives.

EIA nomination submissions will be accepted from family members or students only and should specify how the nominee has made a difference in the life of their child with special needs. EIA nominations will be verified and separated into categories. The winner of each category will be determined by committee solely on the content of the submission.

**NOMINATION PROCESS:**

Excellence in Action (EIA) Awards (to be submitted by parents or students only):

Please submit a nomination for an individual who has made a difference in the life of your child with special needs. This individual can be from your child’s school or from the community. This includes all teachers, support staff, therapists, administrators, volunteers, district staff, transportation staff, crossing guards, tutors, mentors, sports coaches & recreation leaders, etc.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

If you would like to submit a paper nomination, have a question regarding the nomination process or need assistance, please contact Debbie Valdes, FDLRS Parent Services, telephone (813) 837-7732 or email fdlrsparentservices@hcps.net.

⇒ Video and paper nominations are due by 8am, Monday, February 14, 2022.
⇒ Online nominations are due by 8am, Monday, February 21, 2022.

Please provide accurate contact information so that you and your nominee receive future notifications about the awards.

If completing the online form, we recommend typing the reason for your nomination in a separate document which can be copied and pasted into this online form. Maximum 250 words.

winner_recognition_made_possible_by_a_grant_from: suncoast_credit_union
What is Articulation?

Whether your child is moving from elementary school to middle school or from middle school to high school, the transition may sometimes cause anxiety in parents and students. To make this transition easier for everybody, Hillsborough County Public Schools follows an organized and efficient plan to exchange information between the sending and receiving schools for all students who have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). This communication between the two schools during this change is referred to as articulation.

Here are some frequently asked questions from parents:

How does my child’s current school prepare for my child to attend the new school?
Between the months of November and January, an articulation meeting takes place between your current Exceptional Student Education (ESE) contact, your student’s Case Manager, as well as an administrator and an ESE contact from the new school. This communication between the two schools is to share current information about services and placement. This initial meeting is informal and is only a preliminary exchange of information.

When can I present my questions or concerns with the schools?
Between the months of March and May, your school will schedule an IEP revision meeting to discuss articulation. This meeting would be similar to an annual IEP review and may include an ESE representative from your child’s new school. If your child is turning 12 or entering 7th grade, whichever comes first before the current IEP expires, your child will also be invited to the meeting.

What can I do to prepare for my child’s articulation IEP meeting?
Ask questions! A lot of information will be covered at this meeting and can be overwhelming, so begin writing down your questions now. This will help you to be better equipped and make sure that all your questions are answered.

How can I help smooth the transition for my child with this change?
Some ways to help your child become familiar with the new school include:

- drive by the school and talk about it.
- explore the school’s website to see if there are any events over the spring or summer you could attend.
- attend the open house for incoming students. This will give you the opportunity to meet teachers and some classmates and do a “dry run” of your child’s schedule (you can even pick up a map in the front office).
- create a visual aid of your child’s schedule with teacher names, classroom numbers and times.

The best way to help your children through this transition is to keep a positive attitude. Reassure them that they will become more comfortable and confident in time and that there are several other incoming students feeling the same way. Remind your child that the school and teachers want them to be successful and that they are there to help.
Superintendent’s Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

The primary focus of the Superintendent’s Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities, is to identify and recommend systemic strategies to improve outcomes for all students who have disabilities within Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS). Voting members of the Council are appointed by the Superintendent and are comprised of school district personnel, parents of students receiving Exceptional Student Education (ESE), and community members. Guests are encouraged to attend the council meetings, to volunteer to participate in work groups, and to express interests and topics for the council to consider for discussion at future council meetings. Additional information can be found on the HCPS Exceptional Student Education page at Exceptional Student Education (Special Education) / Superintendent’s Advisory Council for the Education (hillsboroughschools.org)

Are you interested in becoming a Council member? Complete the Willingness to Serve form for consideration.

For questions or if you are interested in attending, contact Parent Services at (813) 837-7732 for more information.

Are you interested in finding practical guidance, strategies, and helpful tools for your child with special needs? The Florida Department of Education is proud to provide access to the Special Ed Connection at no cost to families of students with disabilities. For more information and to gain access to this free resource, visit Special Ed Connection - FDLRS Hillsborough.

Creating a Plan for the Future

Looking for information about opportunities and services available after high school for your student receiving Exceptional Student Education services?

During our Creating a Plan for the Future virtual event, families were able to connect with community resources and providers. If you were unable to attend one of the many breakout sessions, you can visit Creating a Plan for the Future - FDLRS Hillsborough to explore provider information or listen to one of the many recorded breakout sessions.
Parent Services is supported by Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) and Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS). Our goal is to guide and empower families to become collaborative, effective advocates for their child with special needs by providing information, help and support to promote academic and social success in school and within the community. Each Exceptional Student Education (ESE) parent liaison works closely with regional district schools and staff and is a parent of a child who has received ESE services.

FDLRS Parent Services

Debbie Valdes, FDLRS Program Manager, (813) 837-7733
Corinne Smith, FDLRS Communications Liaison, (813) 837-7872

Parent Services Information

(813) 837-7732 (English) • (813) 837-7728 (Spanish)
fdlrsparentservices@hcps.net

Parent Liaisons, Exceptional Student Education

Jennifer Belinc-DeGregorio, (813) 815-3410
Sandra BuShea, (813) 360-1159
Lexie Harvey, (813) 738-2535
Lina Moreno, (813) 773-6804
Christine Poe, (813) 279-1851
LaNaye Wilson, (352) 585-9993

Hillsborough County Resources

Yellow Dot: The Yellow Dot program gives you a voice when you are seriously injured following a traffic crash. The Yellow Dot sticker displayed on your vehicle window alerts first responders to valuable health care information located in your glove compartment (medications, pre-existing medical conditions, special needs, and other important medical information). Hillsborough County - Yellow Dot

Safe Encounter: Register yourself or family members who suffer from Alzheimer's disease, blindness, autism, Down syndrome, deafness, and other medical and developmental disabilities that affect the way individuals interact and respond to law enforcement officers. Hillsborough Safe Encounter Registration, File a Registration Online | HCSO, Tampa FL (teamhcs.com)

City of Tampa Voluntary Special Needs Registry: The Tampa Police Department and Tampa Fire Rescue have joined together to better help families who may have a family member with a medical condition or special need. A special sticker has been created for families to place near their front door or on their car to help first responders recognize if someone has a medical need when they are responding to a call. City of Tampa Voluntary Special Needs Registry | City of Tampa.
Prepared Students for Life

To provide an education and the supports that enable each student to excel as a successful and responsible citizen. FDLRS Parent Services News & Information is designed to be an informational source for parents of Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) Exceptional Student Education (ESE). All submittals are subject to District supervisory approval. Hillsborough County Public Schools does not necessarily endorse all information.

School Board
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Exceptional Student Education
Kimberly Workman, General Director

Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System
Michael Levine, Supervisor

Pursuant to Title VI, Title IX, Section 504/Title II and other civil rights regulations, the School District of Hillsborough County does not discriminate nor tolerate harassment on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, genetic information or pregnancy in its educational programs, services or activities, or in its hiring or employment practices; and it will take immediate action to eliminate such harassment, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects. The district also provides equal access to its facilities to the Boy Scouts and other patriotic youth groups, as required by the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies: Dr. Pansy Houghton, Executive Officer, Compliance. 813-272-4000; pansy.houghton@hcps.net; 901 E. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa, Florida 33602. Office for Civil Rights Compliance

The School District of Hillsborough County is committed to providing websites that are accessible to all of our stakeholders. If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader, eye-tracking device, voice recognition software, etc.) and are experiencing difficulty accessing information on this site, the following person has been designated to handle inquiries or complaints related to the functionality or inaccessibility of online content: Dr. Pansy Houghton, Executive Officer, Compliance. 813-272-4000; pansy.houghton@hcps.net; 901 E. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa, Florida 33602.

As required by Section 668.6076, Florida Statutes, you are hereby notified that: Under Florida law, e-mail addresses are public records. If you do not want your e-mail address released in response to a public records request, do not send electronic mail to this entity. Instead, contact this office by phone or in writing. History--s. 1, ch. 2006-232.

Our mailing address is:
Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System / Parent Services
4210 West Bay Villa Avenue
Tampa, Fl 33611