

# EXTRA SPECIAL EDITION

Parent Newsletter

Spring 2017-2018

Welcome to the spring *Extra Special Edition Newsletter* for 2017-2018. Each issue contains information for parents and caregivers regarding children in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program in our district.

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## Parent Survey— We Need Your Input

**Parents are the experts when it comes to their children.** Each year, the Florida Department of Education conducts a survey designed to provide information on how well Florida's schools are partnering with parents and promoting parent involvement in their child's education. The survey is open to all parents of children with an individual educational plan (IEP) receiving ESE services from preschool age through grade 12.

This is an opportunity for parents to share their knowledge of what has worked, as well as those things that need improvement. **The survey is available from February 1 through to May 31 each year.** The district office has already begun sending copies of the survey out for you to complete and return by the deadline. If you have not received your copy, please contact your local school district office:



*"Love the life you live.  
Live the life you love"*

*-Bob Marley*

## Special Ed Connection

Are you interested in finding practical guidance, strategies, and tools that would help you better help your child benefit the most from special education services? Would you like to stay informed and up to date on changes in special education law or trends in exceptional student education?

The Florida Department of Education is proud to provide access to Special Ed Connection® **at no cost to families of students with disabilities who are enrolled in special education programs.**



To request access to this valuable resource please email Parent Services at [beth.johnson@paec.org](mailto:beth.johnson@paec.org). If you do not have access to the web please call 850-638-6131 x 2310.



## McKay Scholarship Notice

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We would like to inform you that your child **may** be eligible to participate in the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, commonly known as the McKay Scholarship Program. This program was created to provide educational options to parents of students with disabilities.

By participating in the McKay Scholarship Program, your student may be able to attend a different public school in your district, attend a public school in an adjacent district or receive a scholarship to attend a participating private school.

To be eligible for the McKay Scholarship Program, a student must apply for the program prior to withdrawing from public school. The student must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Accommodation Plan issued under s. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (with duration of more than six months), and

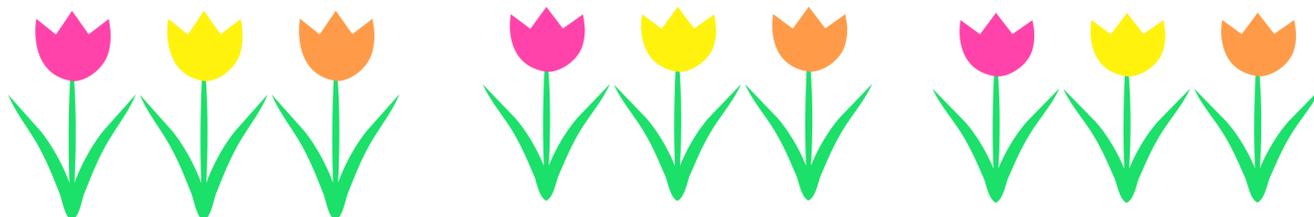
- Have been enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school (Grades K-12) for the school year prior to applying for a scholarship (foster students may be exempt from this requirement); or
- Have been a pre-kindergarten student who was enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the school year prior to applying for a scholarship; or
- Have received specialized instructional services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program from an approved provider pursuant to s. 1002.66 during the previous school year; or
- Have attended the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind during the preceding school year's student membership surveys (Grades K-12).

To find out if your student is eligible, you may apply for the McKay Scholarship Program on the School Choice website at [www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/](http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/) Select the **McKay Scholarships** link, then **Parents**, and then the link titled **Apply for a McKay Scholarship**.

To learn more about your child's educational options, please contact your school district's Parental Choice Office. You may also contact the Florida Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice Information Hotline at 1-800-447-1636, or visit the School Choice website at <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/> and click the **McKay Scholarships** link.

**In order for a student to be eligible for the program, intent to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program must be filed on the School Choice website prior to withdrawing from public school. The deadline to apply for the first payment period of the 2018-2019 school year is July 3, 2018.**

Please note this letter serves to notify you that your child may be eligible to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program. **This letter does not guarantee your student's eligibility.**



## Inclusion– What Can I Do As a Parent?

What can you do to promote effective inclusive practices in your child's classroom?

- ◆ **Ask** your child's teacher what you can do at home to make it easier for your child to be included, such as helping with special homework projects or practicing vocabulary and communication skills.
- ◆ **Stay** on top of what your child is learning at school. Ask your child's teacher to share the results of his or her weekly progress.
- ◆ **Read** stories to your child about friendship and belonging. Talk about how to make friends at school.
- ◆ **Ask** your child to draw a picture or write about the meaning of friendship.
  - \*How do friends help each other?
  - \*What are some things friends do together?
  - \*How can you make friends?
- ◆ **Be** a school citizen. Participate in parent activities, such as Parent Teacher Association. Volunteer for field trips and other activities where parents are needed.
- ◆ **Thank** teachers for efforts to include your child. Send thank you notes. Celebrate success, no matter how small. Let the principal, superintendent, and school board members know how teachers are helping include your child.

Resource: Florida Inclusion Network. Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Student Education and Student Services.

[www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com](http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com)



## Family Cafe

The Family Cafe invites you to attend Florida's premier event for people with disabilities, The Annual Family Cafe!

***The 20th Anniversary Family Cafe is set for June 15-17, 2018 at the Hyatt Regency Orlando in Orlando, FL.***

Since 1998, The Annual Family Café has brought Floridians with all types of disabilities together for three days of information, training and networking opportunities each June. With a great range of individual breakout sessions, a packed Exhibit Hall with dozens of vendors, and a series of special events including Keynote speakers and The Governors' Summit on Disabilities, The Annual Family Café offers families exposure to a range of public and private resources on a grand scale, opportunities to find support by networking with other families, and unprecedented access to policy-making officials.

There is **no registration fee for individuals with disabilities** and their family members or caregivers.

**The registration brochure for The 20th Anniversary Family Cafe is now available!**

You can download the brochure and registration form by going to : [https://familycafe.net/components/com\\_rseventspro/assets/images/files/RegistrationBrochure2018.pdf](https://familycafe.net/components/com_rseventspro/assets/images/files/RegistrationBrochure2018.pdf)

**Online registration is now open.** To register go to: <https://familycafe.net/20th-annual-family-café>

You can also register by mailing or faxing a completed registration form to The Family Cafe office at any time. ***Whether you register online, by mail, or by fax, your chances of receiving financial assistance are the same.*** Mailing Address: THE FAMILY CAFÉ 820 E Park Ave. Suite F-100, Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Fax: (850) 224-4674

Phone: (850) 224-4670

Toll Free: (888) 309-CAFE

Email: [info@familycafe.net](mailto:info@familycafe.net)



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website: [www.paec.org](http://www.paec.org)

Serving Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Walton, and Washington counties



"The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System is funded by the State of Florida, Department of Education, Division of Public Schools and Community Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, through federal assistance under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B; IDEA Part B, Preschool; and State General Revenue funds."