



Policy Brief: Adults with Disabilities

Department of Legislative Affairs

Broward County Public Schools

SUMMARY:

The Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) **Adults with Disabilities** (AWD) Program works tirelessly to provide intellectual stimulation, life and job skills lessons and other services for those with a wide range of learning disabilities. BCPS uses AWD funding from the State to provide services to approximately 500 adult students with disabilities.

Since 2001, BCPS has provided a specialized curriculum and assessments to address skills in each area of Florida's Adults with Disabilities Grant: Quality of Life, Lifelong Learning, and Workforce Preparation. Additionally, benchmarks were established to standardize the program for purposes of collecting data and monitoring performance. Our "Striving for Success" curriculum became a model for the state and was shared with other AWD stakeholders across Florida. The "Striving for Success" curriculum focuses on increasing independence for students through skill development in areas such as household maintenance, pre-employability skills, community inclusion, behavioral and social skills, communication skills, and functional academics.

AWD funding has historically been distributed to colleges and school districts across the State, who then contract with community providers for services. However, during the 2015 Florida Legislative Session, \$10 million in funding for the statewide AWD program was omitted from the final budget passed by the Florida Legislature and presented to the Governor. In 2016, the program was only partially restored resulting in a \$121,413 shortfall for the BCPS AWD program, the BCPS AWD program received \$800,000.

2015-16 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- At Rock Island Center, students have earned over \$800 through operation of a "microenterprise" that teaches them production skills, customer service skills, money and reading skills, and business decision-making skills involved in owning a small business.
- At Seagull School, students with varying disabilities utilizes the PASS Structured Teaching model, which simulated authentic home and work environment to learn hands-on work and daily living skills, such as clerical, domestic, and financial skills in order to increase student independence
- At Cypress Place, students with significant physical and intellectual impairments and autism-spectrum disorder learned the skills necessary to access the internet, utilize e mail and social media, and also functional computer skills. Students used adaptive switches and specialized keyboards to access computers independently and without intervention.

REQUEST:

BCPS is requesting that consideration be given to the following to address the current lack of state resources for AWD:

- IDEA Reforms Through Reauthorization
 - Increase age limit for Part B activities to 25 years old.
 - Include reforms from the proposed *IDEA Full Funding Act* (H.R. 551) and S. 130):
 - Amend IDEA to reauthorize and make appropriations for the grant program to assist states and outlying areas to provide special education and related services to children with disabilities;
 - Sets the amount authorized each fiscal year at a percentage of the maximum amount of the grants all states may receive for special education. Increases that percentage each fiscal year from FY2016-FY2025, until it reaches 100% in FY2025 and each succeeding fiscal year.
 - Sets the appropriation for each fiscal year as an amount equal to the difference between the amount of such percentage that is applicable that fiscal year and a specified amount.
 - Makes funds appropriated for a fiscal year available for obligation on July 1 of such fiscal year through September 30 of the succeeding year.

- Increase and Enhance Vocational Rehabilitation Demonstration and Training programs
 - Authorize competitive discretionary funding for demonstration and training programs, targeted specifically to LEAs managing these types of initiatives.
 - Increase overall funding for demonstration and training programs.

- Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act & Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
 - Include programs and policies in Perkins CTE reauthorization that fully address the needs of students and adults with disabilities, including further aligning with funding and programs authorized by ESSA.
 - Improve policies so that Perkins CTE and WIOA state plans are developed with more coordination to ensure programs/policies are better aligned and fully address funding gaps for students and adults with disabilities.