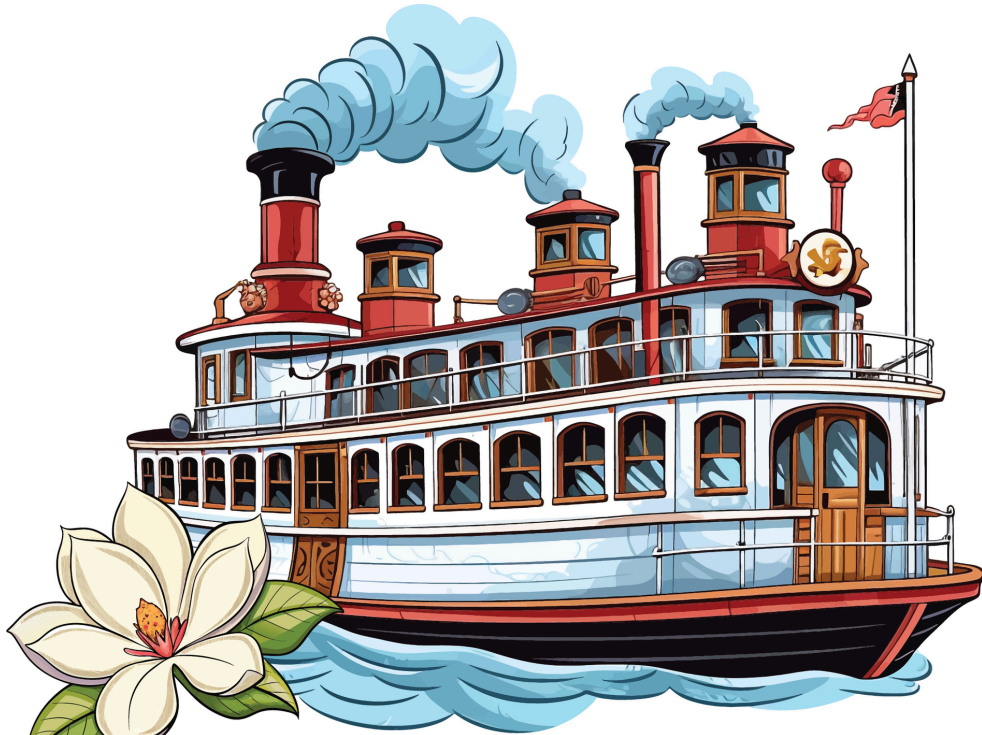




MISSISSIPPI



NAVIGATING
THE CURRENTS IN
SPECIAL EDUCATION

**Mississippi Council for Exceptional Children
Conference**

September 22-24, 2025



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Welcome to the 2025 MS CEC Conference

Dear Conference Participants,
Welcome to the 2025 Mississippi Council for Exceptional Children (MS CEC) Conference! We are so excited to have you join us in the beautiful city of Natchez as we come together to explore this year's theme:

"Navigating the Currents of Special Education."

As teachers, administrators, and professionals in the field, we all know that special education is constantly evolving. From changing legislation and instructional practices to new student needs and shifting resources, our work requires constant adaptability. We are, in many ways, navigating ever-changing currents—sometimes calm, sometimes choppy—but always moving forward in service of our students.

As the Special Education Director for the Long Beach School District, I am personally and professionally familiar with the challenges and changes we face. Over the years, this conference has been an anchor for me—providing not only the latest knowledge and best practices, but also the sense of community and encouragement that reminds me I'm not in this work alone. Our goal for this conference is to offer you that same support: guidance to help you navigate your current challenges, tools to enhance your practice, and connections that strengthen your journey. Whether this is your first MS CEC conference or one of many, we hope you leave feeling inspired, informed, and ready to continue making a difference.

Thank you for being here and for the critical work you do every single day. We're honored to have you as part of this experience and look forward to learning and growing alongside you.

Warmest regards,

Curtis Wicker

Special Education Director, Long Beach School District
President-Elect, Mississippi Council for Exceptional Children



ABOUT US

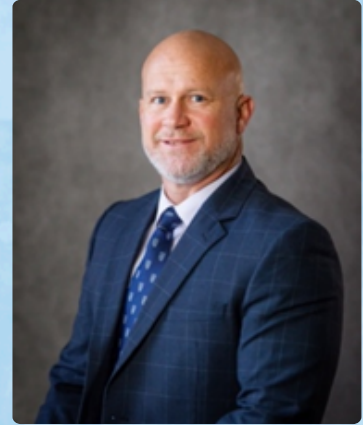
MISSISSIPPI CEC LEADERSHIP TEAM



MICHELLE MCCLAIN
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT



PAIGE PIGOTT BROWN
2025 PRESIDENT



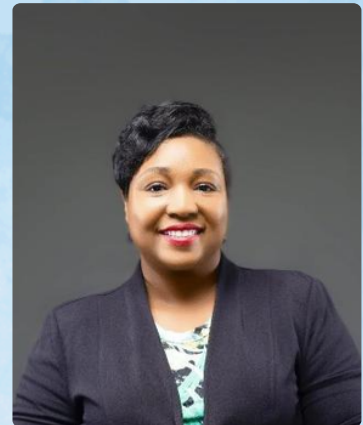
CURTIS WICKER
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BOBBY RICHARDSON
CEC CHAPTER & CAN
COORDINATOR



DEBBIE HUBBERT
MEMBERSHIPS, GRANTS,
& AWARDS COORDINATOR



TONYA GREEN
MDE LIASION




EVENT SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER 22, 2025

8:00 AM - 11:30 AM	Exhibit Setup	Vendor Village
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM	Participant Registration	Lobby
1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	Welcome/Keynote	Nashville
2:30 PM - 2:45 PM	Vendor Visit	Vendor Village
2:45 PM - 4:00 PM	Concurrent Session 1	Various Locations


SEPTEMBER 23, 2025

7:15 AM - 8:00 AM	Participant Registration	Lobby
7:15 AM - 8:00 AM	Coffee, Sodas, & Water with Vendors	Vendor Village
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Keynote Speaker	Nashville
9:00 AM - 9:15 AM	Break	Vendor Village
9:15 AM - 10:30 AM	Concurrent Session 2	Various Location
10:30AM - 10:45 AM	Snack Break/ Visit with Vendors	Vendor Village
10:45 AM - 12:00 PM	Concurrent Session 3	Various Locations
12:00 PM - 1:15 PM	Lunch/Awards	Nashville
1:30 PM - 2:45 PM	Concurrent Session 4	Various Locations
2:45 PM - 3:00 PM	Break	Vendor Village
3:00 PM - 4:15 PM	Concurrent Session 5	Various Locations
7:00 PM - 10: 00 PM	Riverboat Block Party	Natchez Grand Hotel



SEPTEMBER 24, 2025

8:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Participant Registration	Lobby
8:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Coffee, Sodas, & Water with Vendors	Vendor Village
8:30 AM - 9:45 AM	Concurrent Session 6	Various Locations
9:45 AM - 10:00 AM	Break	Vendor Village
10:00 AM - 11:15 AM	Concurrent Session 7	Various Location
11:15 AM - 12:00 PM	Closing Session	Nashville



KEY NOTE SPEAKERS AND HONORED GUESTS

Tonya Green

Believe Better is Possible



Tonya Green is an experienced and compassionate administrator who has spent 40 years of opportunities advocating for students with disabilities. Spending 32 of her years in the education sector as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, Director of Students with Disabilities, and Executive Director of Student Services.

In addition, she has spent 8 of her years after retirement in Interim opportunities in leadership for the MS School for the Deaf and Blind, Federal Programs (Title), Office of Special Education Monitoring (Fiscal) and currently serving as the Executive Director, Interim for the MS Office of Special Education Department. She has worked tirelessly to create inclusive and accessible environments that gave students the opportunity to succeed. She is a strong advocate for educators, parents, collaboration and team leadership. She continues to be committed to driving positive outcomes for students and championing the rights of individuals with disabilities.

Kim Campbell

We Will Survive!



Kim Campbell crosses the continent energizing educational professionals as a dynamic presenter and self-proclaimed “Proud Middle School Teacher.” Building on the lessons learned and techniques developed as a middle-level social studies teacher since 1991, Kim is in national demand as a keynote speaker and workshop facilitator.

Kim is the founder and coordinator of a highly-successful after-school program called Students on Academic Rise (S.O.A.R.), developed to address the achievement gap. Her first book, S.O.A.R: A Handbook for Closing the Achievement Gap, is a manual for helping other school districts replicate this program that transports students to higher academic performance, self-awareness, self-esteem, and individual responsibility.

BREAK OUT SESSIONS

AI for Special Education: Supercharge Your Teaching!

Presented by: Dr. Alison Buehler, Mississippi University for Women

This session explores how AI tools can transform teaching by saving time and enhancing differentiated instruction. Attendees will learn how to effectively use a range of AI platforms to support lesson planning, accommodate diverse learners, and create engaging materials. Tools covered include:

- ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot – versatile AI chatbots for brainstorming, creating lesson plans, questions, and leveled texts.
- Diffit.me – ideal for differentiation, generating leveled reading passages, summaries, vocabulary, and questions.
- MagicSchoolAI, Eduaide.AI, TeachMateAI – educator-focused platforms offering lesson planning, activity generation, rubrics, and support for accommodations.
- Canva with Magic Studio – visual content creation tool with AI features to design presentations and materials for visual and diverse learners.

The session emphasizes practical strategies for integrating these tools to support all students and to elevate teaching effectiveness

AI in Action: Using AI to Personalize and Enhance IEP Development

Presented by: Ashley Chism, Pearl Public

In a world where educators are constantly balancing paperwork, compliance, and the unique needs of every learner, artificial intelligence offers exciting new tools to support the development of high-quality, individualized IEPs. This session explores how AI can assist special educators and directors in drafting data informed Present Levels of Performance, generating personalized SMART goals, and streamlining accommodations and progress monitoring.

Participants will gain a clear understanding of what AI is and isn't, explore real-world applications and tools, and learn best practices for integrating AI into the IEP process without compromising professional judgment or student privacy. Through hands-on activities and live demonstrations, attendees will walk away with actionable strategies and resources to begin leveraging AI in their own practice-making every IEP not just compliant, but truly customized for every learner.

Awareness to Action: Childfind to Eligibility - Part 1

Presented by: Stacy Davis & Jodie Fortenberry

This session will guide participants through the local education agency's (LEA) responsibilities under IDEA from the lens of Child Find through the first MET (Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team) meeting. Topics include legal Child Find obligations, data collection components, key MET membership, and how to determine whether sufficient data supports a suspicion of a disability warranting a full and individual evaluation. This session lays the foundation for informed, compliant, and student-centered decision-making.

Awareness to Action: Childfind to Eligibility - Part 2

Presented by: Genevieve McAlpin

In Part II of this series, participants will examine the evaluation process from planning through eligibility determination under IDEA. Topics include developing a comprehensive, individualized evaluation plan, adhering to required timelines (including the 60-day evaluation period and the 14-day meeting requirement), and applying criteria across the 13 disability categories. The session will conclude with a brief overview of the transition from eligibility to IEP development within the required 30-day timeframe, including a focus on SCD determination.

Blurred Line: Discipline, Disability, and Need for Clarity

Presented by: Erin Jostes and Ellen Ellis, Pearl Public School District

This session will help educators and school staff differentiate between willful defiance and disability-related behaviors. Using real-world scenarios, we'll explore how to respond to challenging student behaviors through the lens of IDEA, FAPE, and IEP accommodations. Participants will learn practical de-escalation strategies, how to adjust assignments without lowering expectations, when disciplinary action may violate a student's rights, and more. Designed for educators with or without a special education background, this training provides clear tools to support all learners while maintaining a positive, legally sound classroom environment.

BMOD: The Behavior Blueprint

Presented by: Krystal Tiblier, Ocean Springs School District

This dynamic and interactive session will introduce an innovative behavior modification blueprint. This low-cost behavior program is designed specifically to benefit students in inclusion settings. It utilizes a structured card system and clearly defined student expectations to promote self-regulation and social-emotional growth. Students are provided with breaks in the "BMod" classroom to de-escalate, meet sensory needs, reflect on behaviors, and take part in social skills lessons. Student stations, or zones, in the classroom are offered to meet the specific needs of each student. Participants will leave this session inspired and ready to implement tools and strategies to strengthen their school's behavior support practices.

Breaking into the Mental Model

Presented by: Kenny Gibson and Mackenzie Allred, MDE

In this session, participants will look closely at how a text is organized to properly store the information for quicker retrieval, better understanding, and overall ability to start creating the mental model of a text. Learn how students with disabilities and struggling readers will use the Text Structure Strategy to create summaries of informational text using graphic organizers and sentence starters.

Bridging Connections: Building Meaningful Relationships

Presented by: Dr. Sara Bardwell, Columbia School District and Denise Harrison, MDE

Join the Columbia School District's Special Education Department and a Special Education Instructional Coach for a collaborative session focused on the power of relationships with administration and teachers. We will explore practical strategies to strengthen connections between educators and students, fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and effective learning environment. This session will offer communication, trust-building, and collaboration tools that can positively impact classroom dynamics and student outcomes.

Building Foundational Literacy in Self-Contained Classrooms

Presented by: Dr. Aly Neelis, Poplarville School District

Teaching literacy in self-contained classrooms requires individualized strategies that meet students' diverse learning profiles. In this interactive session, participants will learn effective, research-based techniques for building foundational literacy skills in students with a range of cognitive needs. Practical examples, lesson templates, and tools for differentiated instruction will be shared, focusing on phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing, as well as multisensory approaches.

Co-teaching in the Inclusive Classroom

Presented by: Kristen Crawford, K-Sped Consulting, LLC

The session will explore co-teaching, an instructional approach where two or more educators collaborate to support diverse learners in the same classroom. It will cover six co-teaching models designed to maximize student growth: team teaching, one teach-one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and one teach-one observe. Benefits of co-teaching include differentiated instruction, smaller student-to-teacher ratios, diverse expertise, inclusion, and professional growth. Best practices emphasized include shared planning time, clear roles, multiple teaching models, joint ownership of students, open communication, classroom management agreements, flexible grouping, data-driven instruction, mutual respect, and ongoing professional development. Challenges such as limited planning time, role confusion, differing teaching styles, student perceptions, and administrative support will also be addressed.

Connected Classrooms From Plans to Practice

Presented by: Dr. Terri Rhea, Yazoo County School District

The session will introduce the intersection of special education (SPED) and artificial intelligence (AI), highlighting everyday examples, opportunities, and challenges. It will explain why AI matters in special needs education, addressing unique challenges, paperwork burdens, and ethical considerations. The discussion will cover how AI supports various special education components, including differentiated instruction, communication aids, sensory-friendly technology, educational planning, personalized learning, and emotional regulation. Participants will explore AI tools and resources for educators (planning, administration, documentation, assessment) and for students (communication, literacy, executive function, focus, social-emotional learning, accessibility).

DIY: Using Special Ed Connection

Presented by: Kelly Whiting, LRP Media Group

The Mississippi Department of Education / Office of Special Education provides every LEA in the state with a subscription to Special Ed Connection®. During the session we will focus on the wealth of ready-made charts, activities and ready-to-use tools available on Special Ed Connection. From You Be the Judge to SmartStarts, to Alphabet Soup, come learn how these features, and many others, will save you time when preparing for in-house professional development and staff trainings.

Do You UnderSPED It? What SPED Students and Parents Would Like You To Know.

Presented by: Dr. Anthony O'Neal, Perry County School District

As the parent of a child with special needs, I have witnessed first hand the lack of understanding that many have about students with disabilities. The student and their parent are dealing with more than what may be seen on the surface. This session will help you to see through the lens of a child/parent.

Early Learners Big Steps: The ABCs of using HLPS to Support Transition from Part C to Part B

Presented by: Dr. Blair Crigler, Mississippi Department of Education

Discover strategies for ensuring seamless transitions from early intervention to preschool under IDEA. This session explores key compliance steps, collaborative practices, and how High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) empower educators to support children and families during this critical transition phase.

Efficiency Meets Individualization

Presented by: Christy Bostic and Hanna Lawler, Ocean Springs School District

In this session, two 6th grade inclusion teachers share a collaborative planning model that cuts lesson planning time in half while preserving the individualization required for IDEA students. Attendees will learn how to assign planning responsibilities based on teacher strengths, create goal-based student groups, and build a shared lesson plan template. This session will provide practical tools, implementation strategies, and communication systems that enhance consistency, promote teamwork, and support high-quality instruction across the special education team.

Empowering Families for Education, Collaboration, and Transition

Presented by: Kellie Fondren, Patricia Hampshire, Valerie Webb, Mississippi State Univ.

The Empowering Families for Educational Collaboration and Transitions (EFFEFFECT) project is an initiative designed to strengthen partnerships between families and professionals supporting children with disabilities in Mississippi. The project provides targeted family workshops that focus on academic success, positive behavior supports, and home to school collaboration. EFFEFFECT offers practitioners a model for building inclusive, collaborative systems that actively involve families as partners in supporting educational and developmental outcomes for children with disabilities.

Enhancing Student Outcomes

Presented by: Alice Stringer, MS DEBH/ Brookhaven School District

This session will provide educators with practical, high-leverage strategies to support the behavioral needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classroom settings. Participants will explore proactive behavior management techniques, positive reinforcement approaches, and individualized supports that promote student engagement and self-regulation. The session will also highlight the role of explicit instruction, scaffolding, and collaboration with families and specialists in enhancing both behavioral and academic outcomes. Educators will leave with a toolkit of evidence-based, easy-to-implement practices designed to create more supportive, inclusive learning environments for all students.

Ensuring Student Success: Leading the Charge in Child Find Compliance and Impact

Presented by: Amy Stampley, Stone County School District

Gain a clear understanding of Mississippi's Child Find process and legal requirements under IDEA. Explore state-specific timelines for evaluations and eligibility—such as the 60-day evaluation window, Part C to Part B transitions, and referral deadlines for infants and toddlers. Identify common challenges, including delayed evaluations, inadequate documentation, and limited staff or parent awareness, and discover effective strategies to address them. Learn best practices—like appointing a Child Find coordinator, running regular outreach campaigns, collaborating with community agencies, and using tracking systems—to ensure compliance and support for children with disabilities.

Everyone At the Table: Understanding IEP Team Roles and Bringing Your Best Self to the Meeting

Presented by: Joshua Bingham, Attala County School District

This session provides a practical overview of each IEP team member's role and responsibilities under IDEA and Mississippi guidelines. Participants will learn strategies for effective communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution to create productive, student-centered meetings. Topics include legal foundations, member expectations, pre-meeting preparation, managing disagreements, and encouraging parent and student voices. Attendees will leave with tools and confidence to foster trust, accountability, and stronger IEP plans.

Facilitating Effective and Compliant IEP Meetings for Building Level Administrators

Presented by: Lori Sturdivant, Winona-Montgomery County School District

The session will use a checklist that is designed to guide principals and school teams through each section of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, ensuring procedural compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Mississippi state regulations. It follows the natural flow of the IEP. By using the checklist, administrators can verify that all required components of the IEP are addressed, documentation is accurate, and timelines are met. Ultimately, it serves as both a compliance safeguard and a practical tool to support high-quality educational planning for students with disabilities.

From Classroom to Career: Navigating Academics and Life Readiness with Assistive Technology and Employability Tools

Presented by: Missy Tatum, Audio Optical Systems of Austin, Kurzweil Education & Rubin Education Reseller

In this session, we'll explore how to empower students with disabilities through a dual approach: academic accessibility and real-world readiness. Attendees will learn how Kurzweil 3000 supports reading, writing, and comprehension to boost confidence and independence in the classroom. We'll also demonstrate Rubin Education's employability platform and how it builds essential soft skills—like email & phone etiquette, professionalism, and job interview readiness. Together, these tools prepare students not only to thrive in school, but to succeed in post-secondary education, employment, and life.

From Compliance Keeper to Instructional Leader: Navigating the Ever-Changing Role of the Special Education Director

Presented by: Dr. Jennifer Boykin

The role of the Special Education Director is constantly changing. In years past, the Special Education Director was mostly consumed by fiscal support and maintenance of compliance within local programs. While these activities are still critical to programmatic success, the Special Education Director often possesses unique skills to support instruction for diverse learners. Therefore, it is important that Directors begin to embrace the role of instructional leader. This session will explore ways that the Special Education Director can support teachers and school leaders in the design and implementation of instruction that supports positive learning outcomes for all students.

From Frustration to Foundation: Helping Students Struggle Productively

Presented by: Tara Jackson and Alison Reed, Mississippi State Univ.

This session will explore how frustration tolerance, emotional intelligence, and self-regulation play a crucial role in academic success. We'll discuss the importance of using manipulatives to build concrete understanding before moving to abstract concepts, ensuring students develop true comprehension rather than just memorizing facts. By shifting from a "one-size-fits-all" approach to a more hands-on, student-centered model, we can help students navigate struggle in a productive way—transforming frustration into resilience and real learning.

Fuel Your Fire: Self-Care for Educators Who Give Their All

Presented by: Jacqui Thweatt-Burton, Thweatt Advanced Behavior Associates, INC

Educators pour their energy into students every day—but you can't pour from an empty cup. This session helps you recognize signs of burnout, explore the five pillars of self-care, and discover practical strategies to protect your energy, set boundaries, and build resilience. Through reflection and hands-on activities, you'll leave with a personalized self-care commitment to keep your fire burning strong—for your students, your school, and most of all—YOURSELF.

Game On: Exploring Trivial Pursuit as a Reading Intervention for Secondary Students

Presented by: Elaine Baxter and Dr. Patricia Hampshire, Mississippi State Univ.

This session presents a low-cost, high-interest way to engage secondary students with specific learning disabilities in reading: using the board game Trivial Pursuit as a literacy activity. Based on classroom experience and supported by research on game-based learning and motivation, this strategy works well in resource rooms, learning strategies classes, or other small-group settings. The game promotes repeated reading in a format that supports both peer interaction and student choice. These elements help create meaningful literacy experiences using age-appropriate, accessible materials. The session will offer practical guidance for adapting this approach to meet diverse student needs.

IEP Rights and Roles: Understanding Custody, Guardianship, and Legal Authority

Presented by: KaShonda Day, J.D., Adams and Reese Law Firm

Custody and guardianship arrangements can significantly impact who has the legal right to make decisions and participate in the IEP process. This session will provide clear, legally grounded guidance on navigating educational rights in cases of joint or sole custody, foster care placements, and situations involving the Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS). Attendees will gain clarity on how to handle IEP participation when students are wards of the state and receive actionable strategies to ensure compliance with both IDEA and state law. Designed for educators, administrators, service providers, and advocates, this session offers essential insight into one of the most complex and sensitive areas of special education practice.

Incorporating the Power of Assistive Technology in the Classroom

Presented by: Denise Harrison, Mississippi Department of Education

This session defines assistive technology (AT) and explains why it is required. It also examines AT's different examples, types, and functions and how to incorporate them into effective instructional practices in the classroom.

Increasing Confidence and Knowledge of General Education Teachers in the Field of Special Education

Presented by: Tammy White, Long Beach School District

Why: Many school administrators and general education teachers lack a foundational understanding of special education to effectively support families, students with disabilities, as well as special education staff. Research suggests a significant gap in administrators' preparedness in this area with many college admin and educator programs only providing one or two "Introduction to Special Education" courses available and many are not even required. This in turn leads to many issues when working on goals, holding meetings, and understanding the importance of collecting data.

Inclusion in Action: Co-Teaching That Closes Gaps and Builds Belonging

Presented by: Grace Massey, Lowndes County School District

Discover how co-teaching transforms an inclusive middle school ELA classroom into a powerful engine for literacy growth. Grounded in the Science of Reading, this session showcases practical strategies—parallel, station, and team teaching—that differentiate instruction, embed foundational reading skills, and meet accommodations in authentic, real-time ways. Participants will see how returning to essential components like phonological awareness, decoding, and comprehension benefits all learners, not just those with IEPs. Learn how two teachers working collaboratively can provide targeted scaffolds, use data to inform flexible grouping, and create a culture where every student feels supported, engaged, and empowered to succeed.

Leading with the Calendar: A Month-by-Month Guide to Staying Aligned and Compliant in 2025–2026

Presented by: Sharon Coon and Vanessa Virgil Ruffin, Mississippi Department of Education

This session introduces the new MDE OSE 2025–2026 Calendar At-A-Glance—a month-by-month roadmap of key deadlines, activities, and compliance requirements across multiple MDE offices. Participants will explore how to use the calendar to plan ahead, streamline responsibilities, and collaborate with peers, leaving with a customizable digital version ready to implement in their districts.

Let's Rock the Boat; Empowering Special Education Students through Self Advocacy.

Presented by: Dr. Catherine Moxley & Hayley Horton, Pontotoc County Schools

Teaching our students the art of self advocacy through advocacy tool kits such as role play activities, advocacy mapping, reflection circles and more.

Lower the Lifeboat: The Power of a Strong Support Team

Presented by: Ellen Hill and Tami Harrell

In the unpredictable waters of modern education, educators and administrators alike face waves of challenges—academic pressure, emotional strain, systemic gaps, and resource limitations. When the storms hit, survival doesn't depend on steering the ship alone—it depends on who's ready to lower the lifeboat.

This powerful and practical session explores the critical role of a strong support team in educational environments. From counselors and paraprofessionals to administrators and support staff, we'll examine how coordinated, compassionate teamwork serves as the lifeboat for those at risk of sinking. Learn how to build trust, foster collaboration, and act decisively when someone calls for help.

Maintaining Child-Centered IFSP Meetings

Presented by: Jitka Elizarraras, Mississippi State University

Family-professional partnerships across education programs can be critical to a child's progress in their goals. Individualized Family Support Plans (IFSPs) can be a place of difficult discussions surrounding a child. Keeping the child at the center of the IFSP meeting can prevent families from being passive participants in the IFSP process and support the team to achieving meaningful progress for the child. Teams that value families as equal members are more likely to improve child development outcomes, parent-professional collaboration, quality of life, and professional development (McCarthy & Guerin, 2022). The current presentation is a discussion on the perspectives of families in IFSP processes, strategies to improve family-professional partnerships, and managing IFSP meetings to focus on the child.

Mastering IEP Paperwork: A Step-by-Step Guide

Presented by: Kristi Higginbotham, Mississippi Department of Education

Join us for "Mastering IEP Paperwork: A Step-by-Step Guide," where you'll gain practical insights into efficiently navigating and completing IEP documentation. This session will provide you with detailed instructions, helpful tips, and best practices to ensure accuracy and compliance. Whether you're new to the process or seeking to enhance your skills, this session will empower you to handle IEP paperwork with confidence and ease.

Maximizing IDEA Funding: Navigating MOE, Budget Control, and Grant Accountability

Presented by: Michael Gibbons & Mary Knight, Mississippi Department of Education

This session provides special education leaders with practical guidance on effectively managing IDEA funds while ensuring compliance with Maintenance of Effort (MOE), budget requirements, and federal grant accountability. Participants will gain strategies to maximize resources, strengthen fiscal oversight, and align spending decisions with student success.

MS CASE Board Meeting and Questions and Answers

Presented by: MS CASE Board

Join the Mississippi Council of Administrators of Special Education (MS CASE) Board for important updates, discussions on current initiatives, and an open Q&A. This session offers members an opportunity to connect directly with board leaders and engage in collaborative dialogue.

Navigating the State Complaint Process, Common Pitfalls/issues and Ways to Avoid Them and Then an Overall Emphasis on Dispute Resolution and Timing

Presented by: Mary Margaret Gay, Legal Counsel, Mississippi Department of Education

This training provides school administrators, educators, and support staff with a foundational understanding of legal principles and best practices in conflict resolution and mediation. The session covers relevant laws, and MDE policies/procedures related to managing disputes within school communities, including staff, students, and parent conflicts. Participants will learn effective strategies for early intervention, communication, and resolution, with a focus on fostering a collaborative and legally compliant relationship for ensuring FAPE.

Pre-Oping for the Text Base and the Mental Model

Presented by: Mackenzie Allred and Kenny Gibson

In this session, participants will understand how to determine if their students are in the activate, build, or connect stage of background knowledge. Participants will gain strategies to help students with disabilities or struggling readers continue building background knowledge to better understand and utilize and strengthen their mental model of a text to help create a successful product or outcome.

Reaching ALL Subgroups including SPED with GOOD Tier I Instruction, Technology, and Differentiation

Presented by: Dr. Mina Lightsey, Laurie Brewer, Chaffie Gibbs, and Dr. Leigh Mobley, The Excellence Group

Finding efficient and effective ways for teachers to reach all subgroups in a monumental task. This session will outline tried and true methods to address all subgroups to improve academic performance. Tools at your disposal, MTSS, educational benefit for SPED students, AI, and data will be the basis for developing increased differentiation and instructional delivery for all students.

Reclaiming the Table: Keeping Student Needs at the Center of the Conversation

Presented by: Pam Dollar, Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities

In special education, the IEP process is intended to support individual student growth — yet too often, systemic pressures, adult agendas, and procedural formalities shift attention away from what matters most: the needs of the student. This session re-centers the IEP process on its true purpose by exploring how educators, families, and students themselves can work collaboratively to ensure that student needs remain the guiding force behind every decision. By reclaiming the table, we affirm a shared commitment to dignity, belonging, and meaningful progress for every student — ensuring that the conversation always begins and ends with their needs at the center.

Rolling with the River: A Director's Guide to Surviving and Thriving Cyclical Monitoring

Presented by: Paige Pigott-Brown, North Pike School District

This session's target audience is administrators of special education in local education agencies. The presenter will share real world experiences from navigating cyclical monitoring during the 2024-2025 by the state agency. The presenter will offer suggestions for organization of documentation for time management, tips for programmatic and fiscal self review including fiscal policies and procedures and proactive approaches for procurement of special education evaluation and related services.

Seeing the Whole Picture: A Comprehensive Guide to IDEA Data, Compliance, and Continuous Improvement

Presented by: Sharon Coon, Mississippi Department of Education

This session offers a transparent, full spectrum look at the Mississippi Department of Education's IDEA data landscape. Participants will examine how the indicators contribute to the Annual Determinations and compliance ratings. Using real-world examples and recent monitoring insights, this session will empower LEA leaders to track their own data health, interpret risk indicators, and lead teams in proactive planning that drives both compliance and student outcomes.

Shake, Rattle and Roll

Presented by: Kim Campbell,

Looking for a little "spice" to fire up your students? Want quick, easy activities to engage your class? If so, join me and learn hands-on activities and strategies designed to motivate students. Activities can easily be adapted to any subject matter.

Single-Case Design: Exploring The Impact of Equine Therapy on Self-Esteem and Social Skills in Special Education Students

Presented by: Jodie Fortenberry, Clinton Public School District

This session explores the transformative potential of equine therapy for special education students, focusing on its impact on self-esteem and social skills development. Using parent, student, and teacher perspectives alongside direct behavioral observations, the study provides a comprehensive view of equine-assisted interventions in real time. Employing single-subject design and pre/post assessments, the research fills a critical gap in existing literature, offering reliable, targeted insights into how equine therapy can foster positive psychosocial outcomes and inform tailored therapeutic practices for students with special needs.

Smooth, Effective, and Timely: Transition from Part C to Part B

Presented by: Candice Taylor & Monica Wimberley, Mississippi Department of Education

This training will guide participants through the process of how young children move from Early Intervention services to Early Childhood Special Education or community-based services. Required data for both Part C and Part B will be discussed, including how data is collected, how it is reported, and how providers should use it to determine appropriate services. Strategies for improving communication among entities, including families, will also be shared. These components are all necessary to ensure a smooth, effective, and timely transition from Part C to Part B.

Special Education on the Federal Level: What's Happening Now, What's on the Horizon, and How Does it Impact YOU?

Presented by: Dr. Bridget Bright, The Council of Administrators of Special Education

CASE is the voice of special education leaders nationwide. Discover what current and aspiring special education administrators NEED to KNOW to lead their district in light of recent Executive Orders, U.S. Department of Education actions, and other federal happenings. Learn how national CASE supports leaders to remain current on the most pressing issues in special education.

Sped Bootcamp: Getting Your Teachers in Shape for IEP Season

Presented by: Katie Charleville, Petal School District

Do you have special education teachers that are new to the field of special education or more seasoned teachers that could use a refresher on special education processes? We have developed a year long "Bootcamp" for special education teachers that provides them with all the tools and resources they will need to be a successful special education teacher and prepare them to write compliant IEPs. This bootcamp starts with the basics of special education, walks teachers through a hands-on demonstration of using the IEP writing program, and includes a deep dive of the parts of the IEP document. Each month of the bootcamp features important training in topics such as conducting re-evaluations, setting up progress monitoring systems, and solving real life IEP meeting scenarios. Whether you are a special education teacher looking for additional resources or an administrator wanting to provide quality training for your new teachers, this session is for you!

Supporting Struggling and Dyslexic Readers through Structured Literacy

Presented by: Carol Brackman, EPS Learning

Discover how structured literacy and evidence-based Orton-Gillingham methods can transform reading outcomes for students who learn differently. Walk away with ready-to-use strategies and tools you can implement tomorrow.

The Ultimate Monitoring Toolkit: Build It Before They Visit

Presented by: Julie Etheridge, MSCEC & Christie Rowcliff, MDE

Be ready before monitoring ever begins. In this hands-on session, participants will create their own evidence collection system using sample templates and checklists, equipping them with a practical toolkit to stay organized, document compliance, and feel confident when visitors arrive.

Why Wait? Easing the burden of IEPs by spreading the love throughout the year!

Presented by: Theresa LaPrade, Hattiesburg Public

Over the years many of my fellow Special Educators have stressed over 'IEP Season.' How can I get it all done? When do I have the time to write all of my IEPs? In order to combat this and alleviate the stress of doing it all at once, I have incorporated a strategy of working your IEP a little at a time. Come see if I can help you remove the excess stress and be able to continue to serve your students faithfully even during those dreaded months!

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Conference Social

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See how EPS Learning's roots in the science of reading principles empower Mississippi educators to apply the 5 Pillars of Reading in transforming striving students, including those with dyslexia, into successful readers.

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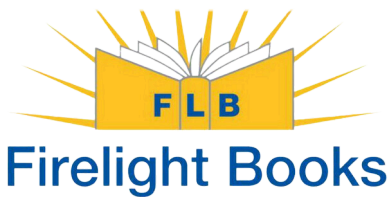
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