Texas Public Policy Foundation

# Presentation to the Commission on Special Education Funding

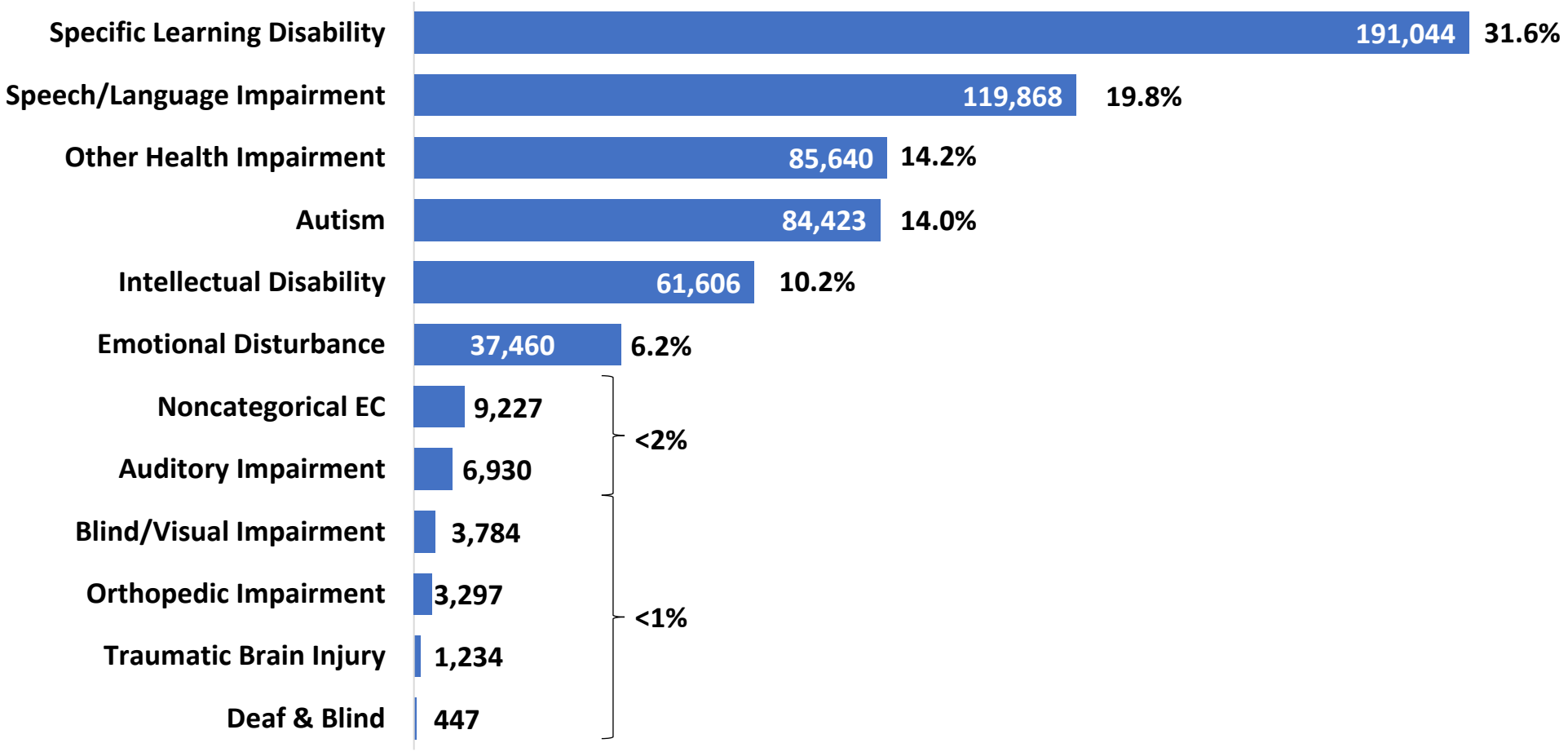
**November 14, 2022**

# Topics:

1. Current Status in Texas
   - Students Served
   - Students On Grade Level
   - Funding Model
2. Florida Funding & Family Empowerment
   - Funding model
   - Student eligibility
   - Student enrollment
   - Eligible expenses
   - Spending patterns over time
   - Rural students
3. Principles We Recommend:
   - Special education is a service, not a setting.
   - Empower families to support unique needs & abilities.
   - Consider data from Supplemental Special Education Services program.

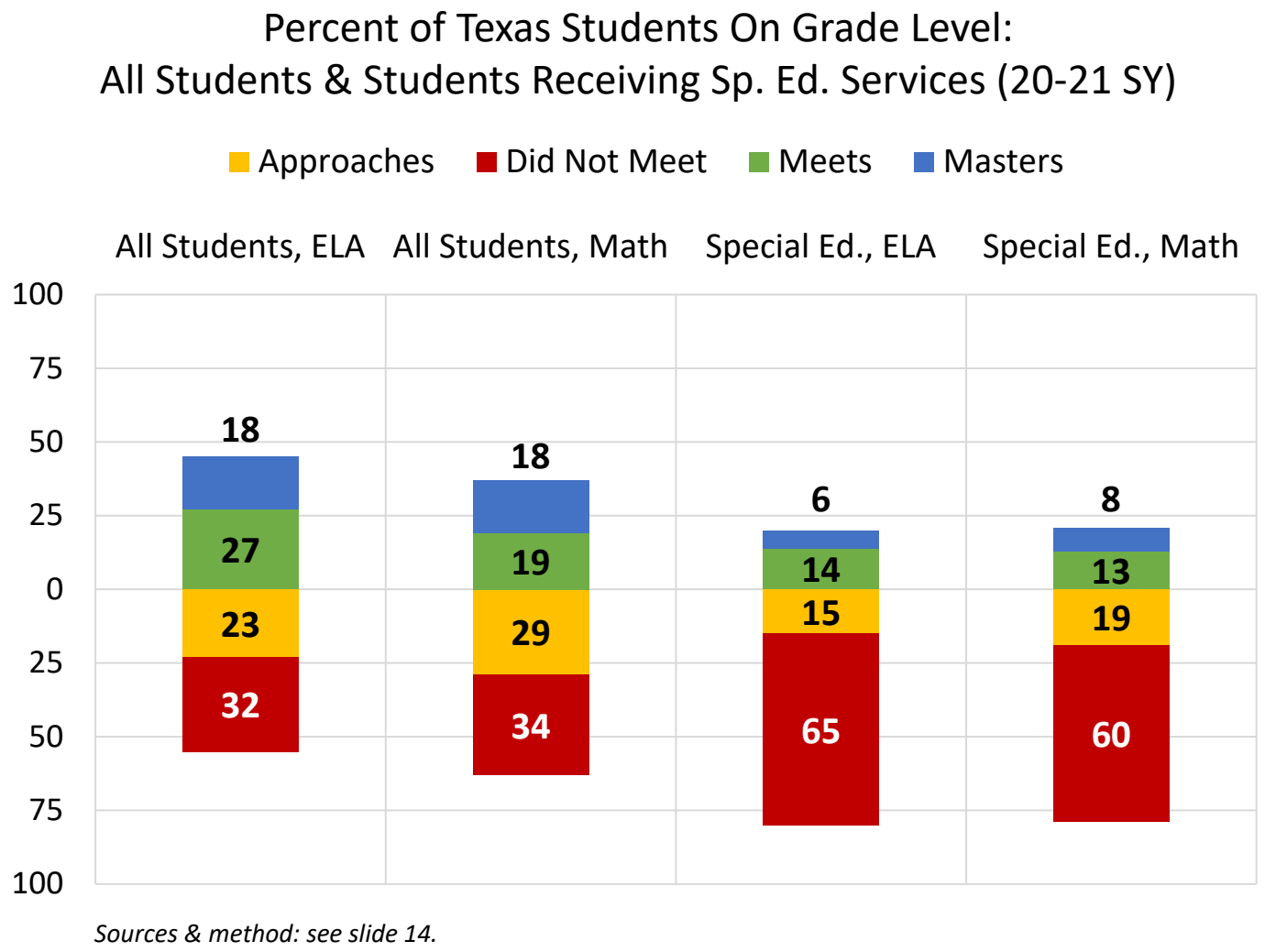
# Students Receiving Sp. Ed. Services

(20-21 SY)



# Percent Students On Grade Level

- Given the distribution of students in special education, 80% of students receiving special education can perform on grade level, if given appropriate support.
- Currently, about 20% of special education students are on grade level.




*Sources & method: see slide 14.*

# Texas Funding Model

- Current funding is substantially affected by student setting.
- Challenge: Students in the same setting may require varied levels of service.

**Special Education Instructional Arrangements and Number of Students (21-22 SY)**

| Arrangement | Location | Student Description[1] | Students (FTE) | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mainstream[2] | In the regular classroom | Student can progress in general education | 183,862 | 54.0% |
| Resource Room | Setting other than regular education | Student in self-contained setting less than half of a school day | 95,533 | 28.0% |
| Self-Contained, Mild, Moderate, Severe: Regular Campus | On regular campus | Student in self-contained setting more than half of a school day | 43,727 | 12.8% |
| Speech Therapy | In the regular classroom or other setting | | 10,851 | 3.2% |
| Vocational Adjustment Class | At a place of employment or work | Student's IEP includes transition goals | 2,183 | 0.6% |
| Off Home Campus | A location other than the student's home district; can | Students in a district that can't provide FAPE | 1,862 | 0.5% |
| Residential Care & Treatment | In a school district campus | Student in residential care facilities whose parents do not live in the school district providing educational services | 1,750 | 0.5% |
| Homebound | Home or hospital bedside | Students confined to home or hospital for four weeks; chronically ill students over any period of time > 4 weeks | 463 | 0.1% |
| Nonpublic Day School | Nonpublic school | | 448 | 0.1% |
| Hospital Class | In a classroom, hospital, or residental care facility not | | 88 | 0.0% |
| State-Supported Living Center | In a state-supported living center | Student resides and educated in state center | 10 | 0.0% |

(1) Student Descriptions included if they are contained in the Administrative Code. (2) Average daily attendace is used for Mainstream.
Source: Texas Admin. Code XIX:2 §89.1005, Statewide Summary of Finances (2021-22)

# Florida Funding Model

- Funds special education as a service, not a setting.
- Five domains are used to group the types of services.
- Five levels are used to describe the nature and intensity of services within each domain:
    1. Curriculum & Learning Environment
    2. Social or Emotional Behavior
    3. Independent Functioning
    4. Health Care
    5. Communication

# Florida's FES-UA: Student Eligibility

The Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) is an ESA for students 3 – 12 years old, through grade 12 or age 22, whichever comes first, with following diagnoses:

- Anaphylaxis
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Being a high-risk child
- Cerebral Palsy
- Down syndrome
- Emotional or a behavioral disability
- Hearing impairment, including deafness
- Hospital or homebound
- Identification as dual sensory impaired
- Intellectually disability
- Language impairment
- Muscular dystrophy
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Phelan-McDermid syndrome
- Prader-Willi syndrome
- Rare disease
- Specific learning disability
- Speech impairment
- Spina bifida
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment, including blindness
- Williams syndrome

# Florida's FES-UA: Students

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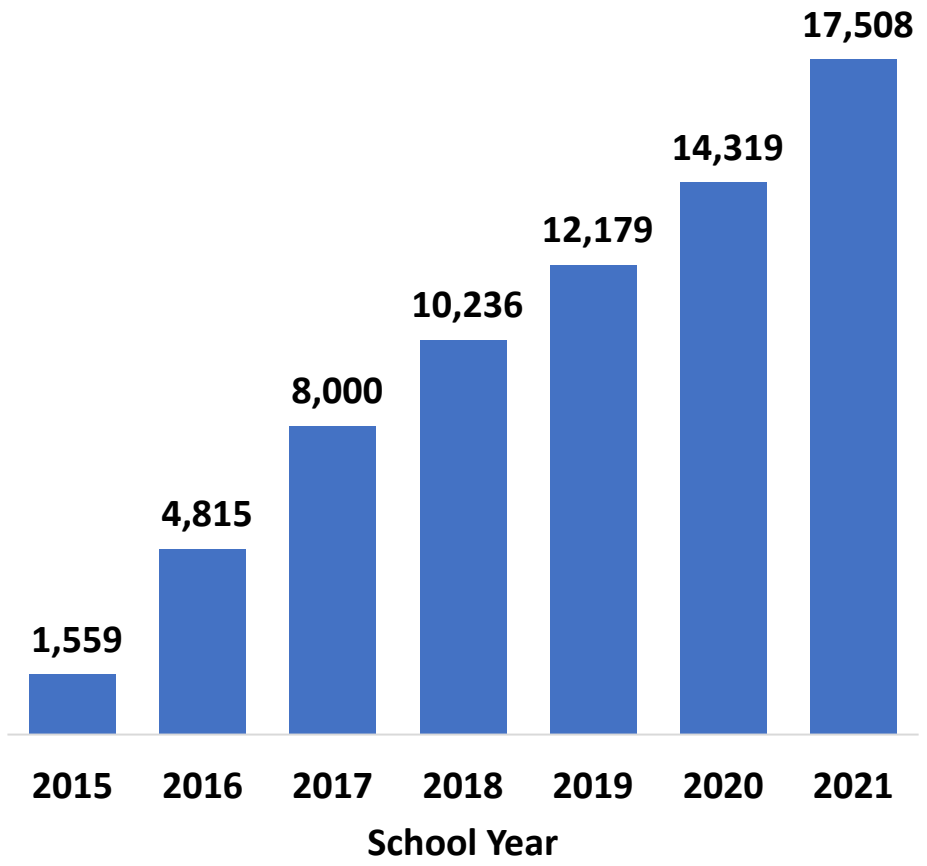
| Students, by Diagnoses | |
|---|---|
| Diagnosis | Percent |
| Autism Spectrum | 53% |
| Rare Diseases | 8% |
| Multiple-Diagnoses | 7% |
| Intellectual Disability | 6% |
| Anaphylaxis | 5% |
| Other Health Impairment | 5% |
| High-Risk | 4% |
| Specific Learning Disability | 3% |
| Cerebral Palsy | 2% |
| Down Syndrome | 2% |
| Hearing Impaired | 1% |
| Speech Impaired | 1% |
| All Other | 4% |



# Florida's FES-UA: Eligible Expenses

## College

- Eligible Postsecondary Institution or Program
- Florida 529 College Savings Plan
- Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Program

## Curriculum

- Curriculum/Course
- DOE Approved Online Course Providers
- DOE Approved Virtual Courses

## Instructional Materials

## Public Services

- Contracted Public School Services
- Florida Virtual School (FLVS)
- Programs Offered by VPK Program Providers or School Readiness Providers

## Specialized Services

- Certified Horse Therapy Centers
- Certified Music and Art Therapy
- Specialized After-School Education Program Fees
- Specialized Services
- Specialized Summer Education Program Fees
- Tuition/fees for nationally or intl. recognized training programs for children with neurological disorders or brain damage

## Testing

- Annual Educational Evaluation Fees (Home Ed Only)
- Standardized Testing Fees

## Private Tuition

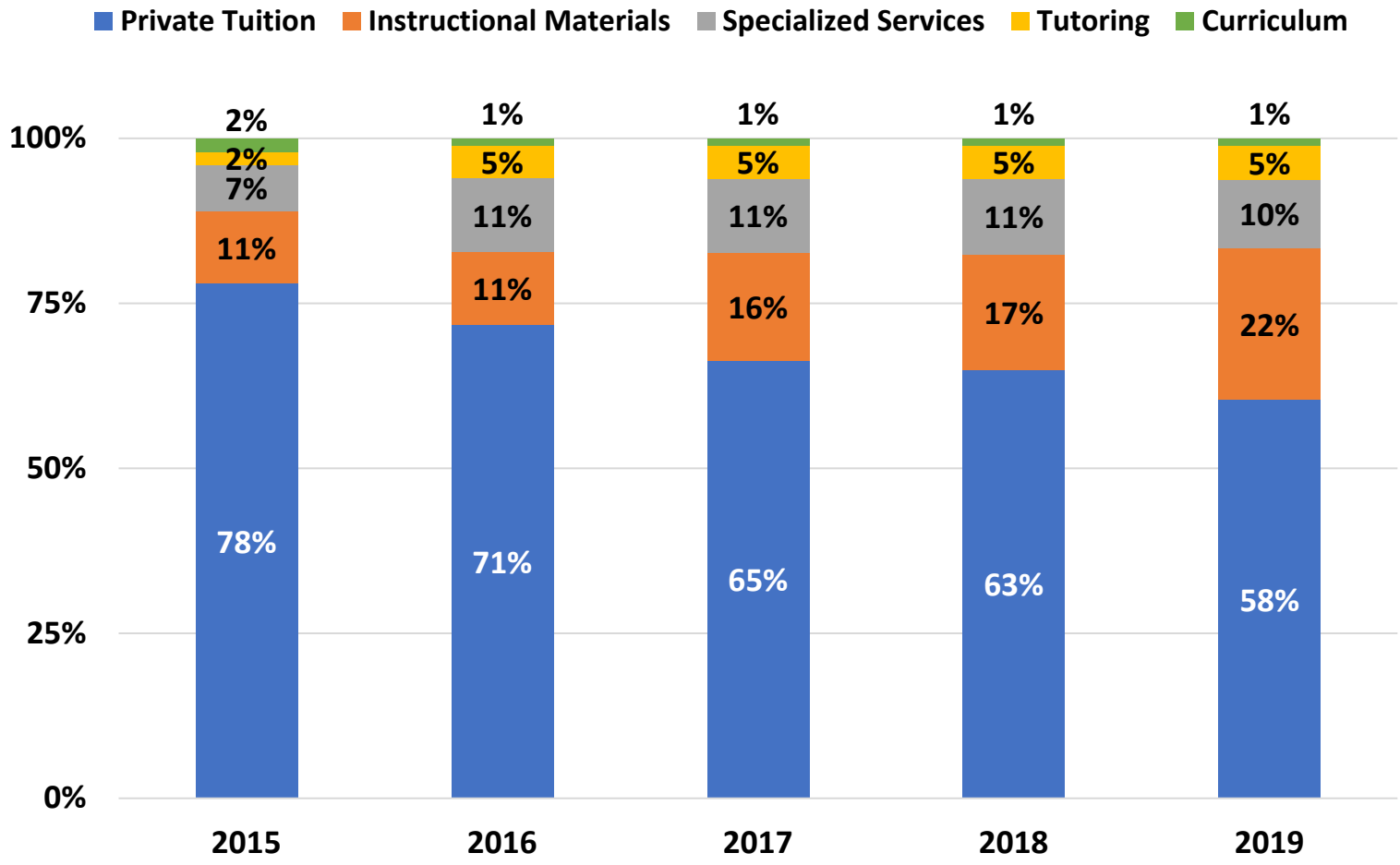
- Eligible Private School
- Enrollment tuition and fees
- Home Education Tuition/Fees

## Tutoring

- Full-Time Private Tutoring Program
- Part-Time Private Tutoring Services
- Transition Services Provided by Job Coaches

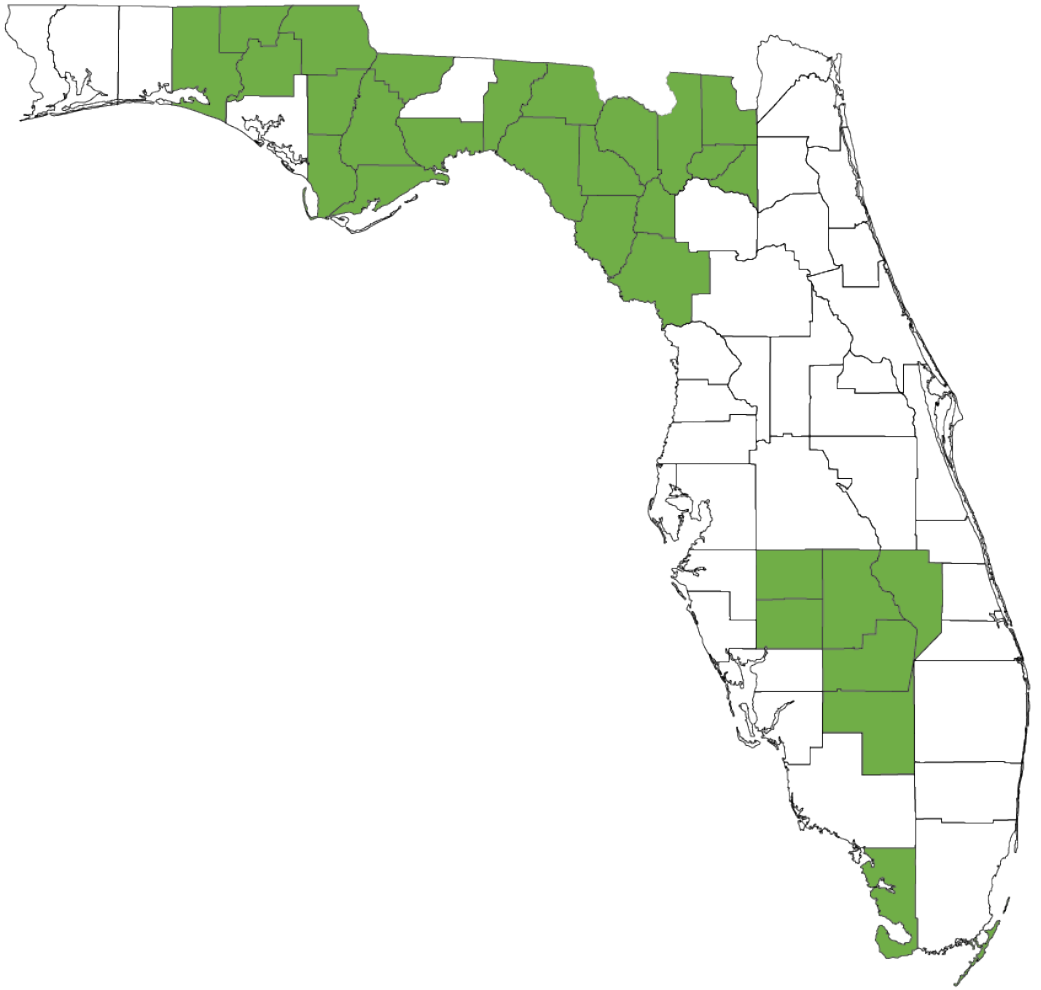
# Florida's FES-UA: Spending Patterns

- Over time, families make purchases from multiple categories.
- Families are willing and able to customize their child's education.



# Florida's FES-UA: Rural Families

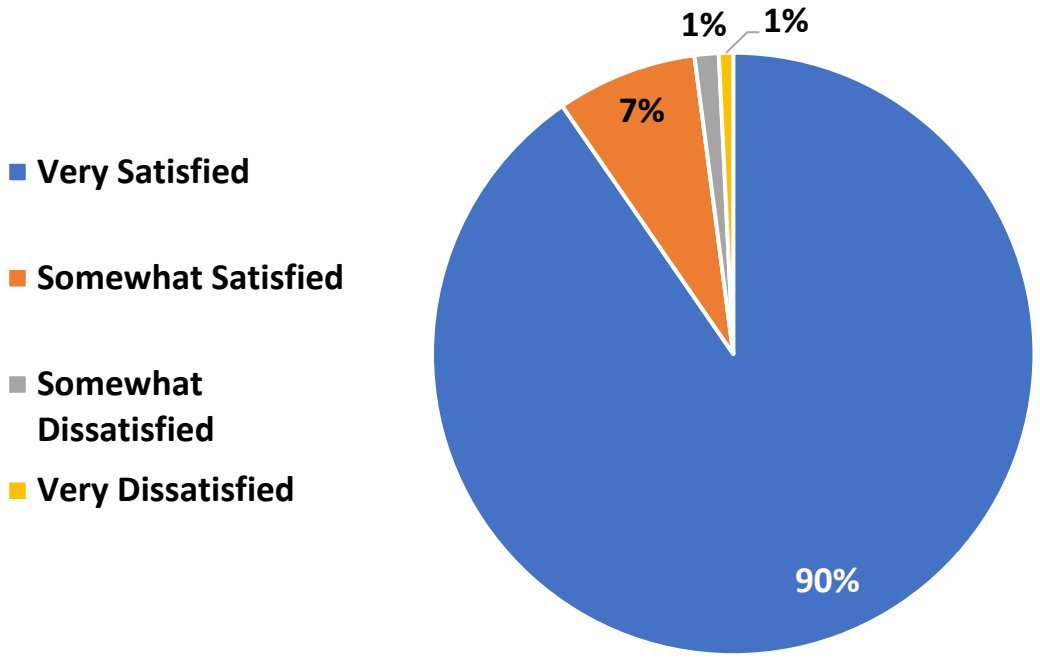
- Families made more frequent and customized purchases.
- Families spent 12 percentage points less on tuition, and a greater share on curriculum.
- In the 30 rural counties, 596 students participate. (20-21 SY)



# Principles We Recommend

1. Special education is a service, not a setting.
2. Empower families to support unique needs & abilities.
3. Consider data from Supplemental Special Education Services program.
   - As of May 2023, funding could support 72,600 students; 9,000 students waitlisted.
   - TEA projects waitlist of 48,000 - 74,000 students by May 2023.

SSES Parent Survey Responses: "The goods and/or services I purchased through this grant have helped my child(ren) progress toward learning goals"



# SSES Parent Quotes

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"My child is low functioning autism and I really didn't think he would have any kind of future other than being placed in a supported living situation… His behavior in school has significantly improved and his attention and focus to his seated work activity it's now up to 45 minutes compared to 5 to 10 minutes per previous levels! His reading skills have improved from a second grade level to a fourth grade level!"

"This program has allowed me to purchase many supplies and workbooks that will allow me and my son to work toward his educational goals at home. We are able to work together at a great pace and ensure that he will understand each lesson fully."

"We are so incredibly grateful that we were allowed to be part of this program. I now have wonderful tools that are fun and educational for my son… The selection was vast and I was easily able to pick out items that interest my son. My deepest thanks!"

"The goods I purchased allowed my non-verbal autistic daughter an opportunity to keep pace with her IEP goals at home and she won't need ESY services this year."

"The SSES program was extremely beneficial. It made it possible to get my child the learning materials needed to bridge the gap between school and at home learning."

# Sources & Supplemental Materials

- Slide 3: TEA, *Special Education Trends* (March 2022) page 16
- Slide 4: TEA, 2020-21 TAPR Advanced Data Download (STATESTAAR2 dataset); for method: TEA, *2022 Accountability Manual*, page 13.
- Slide 5: TAC, XIX § 89.1005; TEA, Statewide Summary of Finances, Run ID: 38754 (2021-22)
- Slide 6: Florida Department of Education, *Matrix of Services Handbook* (2017)
- Slide 7: Step Up For Students, *ESA for Students with Unique Abilities*, page 4
- Slide 8: Step Up For Students, *Recipients by Diagnoses* (accessed Nov. 2022); *Distribution of ESA Usage*, page 673
- Slide 9: *Distribution of Education Savings Account Usage among Families: Evidence from the Florida Gardiner Scholarship Program* (Mar. 4 2022), page 673
- Slide 10: *Distribution of ESA Usage*, page 660
- Slide 11: *Distribution of ESA Usage*, page 651, 664; Step Up For Students, *Choice Enrollment in Florida's Rural Counties* (2020-21 SY)
- Slide 12: TEA, *SB 1716 Monitoring Update*, page 11; TEA, Email, April 27, 2022.
- Slide 13: TEA, *Special Education Trends* (March 2022) page 23