

# Improve Access for Students with Disabilities: Model TOOLKITS and Templates

NATIONAL NETWORK FOR DISTRICT AUTHORIZING

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CALIFORNIA CHARTER AUTHORIZING PROFESSIONALS (CCAP)

COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS (CACSA)

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS (FACSA)

# Critical Role District Level Authorizers Perform

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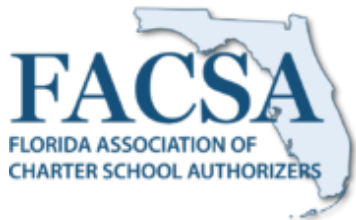
District level authorizers authorize the majority of charter schools in the United States

Ensuring equity for all students is important to authorizers and they want to be more effective in their monitoring and oversight approach

District level authorizers have expressed strong support for state specific tools and templates



# What is the National Network for District Authorizing; Why California, Florida and Colorado?



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California, Florida and Colorado all have a district led authorizing structure

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40% of all authorizers and 30% of all charter schools in the entire United States are in our three states

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Charter Authorizing Organizations are filling a critical authorizer support role for district authorizers

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National Network for District Authorizing leverages expertise and resource sharing

# Innovative Tools

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## California

- Interface with intermediate educational units

## Colorado

- Model Contract and Special Education MOU
- Website Review & Models

## Florida

- Capacity Interview Toolkit

# Interface with Intermediate Educational Units

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- Also known as Educational Service Agencies (ESA)
- Vary by state: BOCES, ESD, ESC, ROE, RESA, CESA, etc.
- California:
  - County Offices of Education (COE)
  - Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

# Interface with Intermediate Educational Units

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- COEs:
  - Oversight, support, training for school districts in areas including special education and charter authorizing
  - Direct services to some students
  - Charter authorizing directly
  - Appeals of charter denials

## Interface with Intermediate Educational Units

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- Supports to districts via COEs
- COE training, resources, networking, direct special ed services
  - COEs on their own – regional network, trainings
    - Sometimes include charter schools as well
  - COEs with CCAP
    - COEs regional “hubs” of communication, conveners
    - Help identify priority needs by region
    - Collaborate on targeted training

# Interface with Intermediate Educational Units

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- SELPAs and authorizing
  - Constraint on advice on a particular case: SELPAs include charters
  - Advantages: Not authorizers, but work closely with charters
  - Technical advice, e.g., on development of toolkits
    - Applications
    - Annual reports
    - Contracts



## Interface with Intermediate Educational Units

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- SELPAs:
  - Under state law, school districts and COEs must form regional groups to develop regional special education service delivery systems
  - Today about 135 statewide
  - Charter schools not their own LEA for special education purposes belong to the SELPA of their school district
  - Charters that are LEAs may apply to join a SELPA
  - Several SELPAs formed to serve charter schools statewide – most by COEs

# CACSA Standard Charter School Application & Rubric

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- Added material on students with disabilities;
- Incorporated materials from NACSA/Center for Learner Equity Guidebook;
- Extensive treatment of issues related to students with disabilities:
  - Human Resources
  - Curriculum and Assessment
  - Professional Development
  - Administration
  - Facilities
  - MTS/Rti

# Colorado Context

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- 61% lack descriptions of how they enroll students with disabilities
- 45% lack descriptions of how they enroll students overall
- 63% don't describe how they educate students with disabilities
- 10% publish enrollment policies with elements that could be interpreted as exclusionary without anti-discrimination clauses
- 18% of application forms ask whether a student has a disability with no anti-discrimination clauses or statements of purpose to help parents understand how information might impact applications

# Website Checklist:

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- An anti-discrimination statement on the main page or on the enrollment page of the website.
- Language stating that the school serves students with disabilities.
- Either mission statement that includes language indicating the intention to serve all students, or if the mission statement does not indicate an explicit inclusive orientation, a link to the anti-discrimination statement and commitment to serving students with disabilities.
- Clear description of the process for enrolling students in general and for enrolling students with disabilities.
- If the school participates in a centralized, district-administered open enrollment process, a statement explaining the school's participation in the district system and links to the district's relevant website and materials.
- Pre-admission forms (such as intent to enroll forms, and registration forms if there are no web-linked application materials) that only ask for the minimum required information and do not ask about disability status or status as another protected class unless it is for purposes of a weighted lottery or the school is chartered to serve students with a particular disability. If the school uses information on disability status for such purposes, the forms must include statements clarifying the purpose and limited application of such information.

<https://coauthorizers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Website-Language-Regarding-Students-with-Disabilities.pdf>

# Anti-Discrimination Statement:

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Should be visible on the front page. Its purpose is to affirm the school's responsibility to not discriminate and to provide special education services.

***Insert school name** does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, ancestry, need for special education services, or any other grounds prohibited by law. **Insert school name** serves students with disabilities and English Learners and provides services to students as required by state and federal law. **(Include link to the page where the additional information is posted.)***

# Examples

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Democracy Prep schools are schools of choice. It is our privilege to educate all scholars regardless of identity, socioeconomic status, religion, citizenship, previous academic record, disability, and intellectual ability. Continue reading to learn how to join the Democracy Prep Family!

# Examples

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CAN MONTESSORI ACCOMMODATE GIFTED CHILDREN?

WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN WITH OTHER SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS?

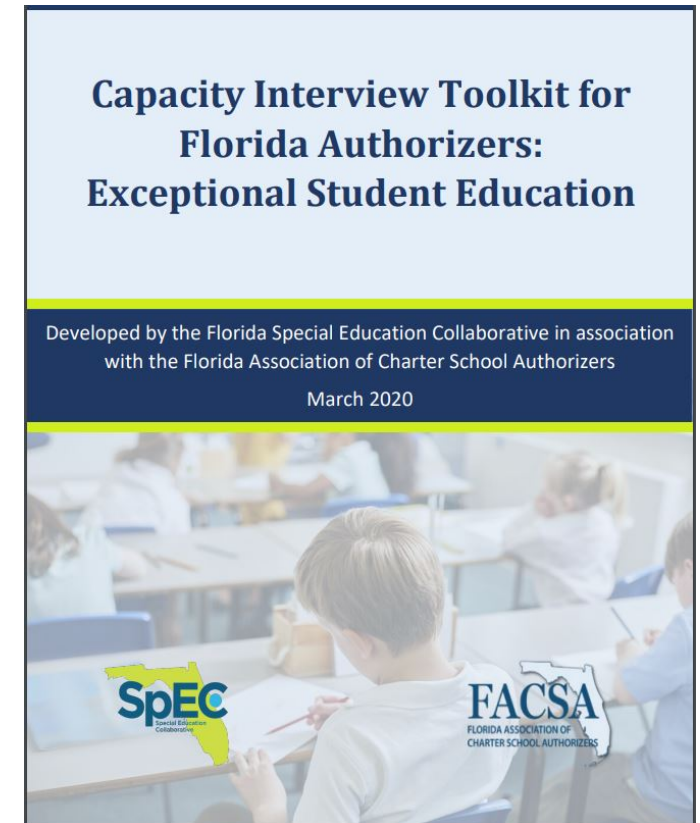
An advantage of the Montessori approach—including multi-age classrooms with students of varying abilities and interests—is that it allows each child to work at her own pace. Students whose strengths and interests propel them to higher levels of learning can find intellectual challenge without being separated from their peers. The same is true for students who may need extra guidance and support: each can progress through the curriculum at his own comfortable pace, without feeling pressure to “catch up.”

We might note that from a Montessori perspective, every child is considered gifted, each in her own way. For every child has his own unique strengths—it is all a matter of degree.

# Capacity Interview Toolkit-Exceptional Students

The Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA) and the Florida Special Education Collaborative (FLSpEC) conducted a needs assessment during the 2019-20 school year related to issues impacting services to students with disabilities in charter schools.

The needs assessment led to a recommendation for the development of a guidance tool for authorizer (district) use during capacity interviews.



Source: <https://flauthorizers.org/resource/capacity-interview-toolkit-exceptional-students/>



# Capacity Interview Toolkit- Exceptional Students

SAMPLE



## B. Equitable Enrollment of Students with Disabilities

**B. The applicant must describe how the school will ensure that students with disabilities will have an equal opportunity of being selected for enrollment in the charter school.**

### Discussion

**What does equal opportunity for enrollment mean in the context of student applications and random lotteries?**

During the capacity interview, it is imperative to determine whether the applicant intends to follow nondiscriminatory policies and practices as it pertains to any subgroup or population of students. The applicant should be expected to convey how its application and lottery process will be systematic and transparent. When discussing the applicant's recruiting and marketing plan or strategies, the school should demonstrate a level of willingness and understanding of the importance of reaching all subgroups and demographics of students. By setting the tone that "all means all", and the school has a defined willingness to include students with disabilities on the front end of their student recruitment and application process, parents of students with disabilities may be more inclined to apply to the school.<sup>3</sup> The school ought to ensure stakeholders are aware of the breadth of services available at the school, which will in turn, ensure the community has the confidence that the services students with disabilities need will be available.

### Indicators or "red flags" that may warrant further discussion include:

- R** In reviewing Attachment S., the applicant's proposed enrollment application, the parent/guardian is asked to indicate any of the following:
  - whether their child has a disability or an individual educational plan (IEP),
  - whether or not their child is currently taking medication, or
  - whether their child has ever been suspended out of school.and/or
- R** When describing the school's lottery system, it is evident that there may be room for human bias in the process, and no plan to mitigate the issue or ensure overall transparency.
- R** The applicant's recruitment plans exclude students with disabilities or harder to reach populations of students.

While the administration of medication and issues related to out of school suspension can be useful when engaging in educational planning for a student, they are irrelevant at the time a student application is completed. Furthermore, in some cases, they can be indicators of a disabling condition and are not purposeful when shared without any other context, or with individuals who may not have special expertise regarding all the related variables. Less automated lottery systems run by individual staff out of public view may be cause for further discussion and possible concern.

### Charter School Evaluation Instrument

*A clear description of how the school will ensure students with disabilities will have an equal opportunity of being selected for enrollment.*

## Discussion



## Red Flags



## Guidance

# Critical Role of Training and Support

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Tools and Templates are important but....

....critical training and professional development support is essential!

## How We Did It

### CACSA

- Stakeholders workshop
- Statewide dissemination

### FACSA

- Small workgroup input
- Stakeholders workshop
- Statewide dissemination

# QUESTIONS

