



**International Board of Credentialing  
and Continuing Education Standards**

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **First Catholic Schools Conference for Exceptional Student Education Planned for July at the University of North Florida**

May 20, 2016, JACKSONVILLE – The Catholic Schools Offices of the Diocese of St. Augustine and the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) are collaboratively planning the first 2016 Catholic Educator Conference on Exceptional Student Education at the Herbert Center at the University of North Florida on July 27, 2016.

The growth of Florida's McKay Scholarship which provides funding for families seeking private school options for their children who have Individual Education or Accommodations Plans (IEPs or Section 504) means Catholic schools are increasingly admitting students with differentiated learning needs.

These funding sources for families, along with Pope Francis's imploring of schools and agencies to break the isolation and stigma for those with disabilities, is resulting in teachers and finding ways to develop staff and equip them with knowledge and skills for meeting the needs of nontraditional learners in their parochial schools. The conference in July focuses on exceptional education and is just one measure of support for this endeavor.

"It's a thrilling time for Catholic families who have children with disabilities and wish more than anything that their child could attend Catholic school," says Beth Foraker, founder of the National Catholic Board on Full Inclusion and Keynote Speaker at the July Conference. Her message to teachers, principals and leadership in Catholic schools around the country is simple: "Any professional growth you make as an educator serves all students. You get better. You can't help but have that expertise seep into the way you teach all the time."

Other presenters at the conference include representatives of the Dioceses of St. Augustine, Orlando, Chicago, and Toledo, as well as The University of Florida Center for Autism and Related Services (CARD), the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) and the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS). A panel discussion by diocesan leaders follows the keynote to highlight bigger picture ideas for schools about adopting support programs, meeting challenges head-on and embracing the growing neurodiversity of their student body.

IBCCES, headquartered in Jacksonville, trains and certifies professionals who work in therapy centers, schools and specialized-service centers for greater autism awareness in 10 Areas of Autism Competency. Their onsite and online interactive training affords centers and schools knowledge and strategies for boosting access and exceeding physical, occupational, and educational goals for children and adults with autism.

The board formed in 2001 and is the leading credentialing organization for professionals in the field of autism and currently offers the Certified Autism Specialist®, Autism Certificate and the Certified Autism Center designations. Autism, commonly known as ASD, is a neurodevelopmental disorder with a wide range of symptoms and impairment levels. According to a 2010 study conducted by the Center for Disease Control, 1 in 68 children in the US have been diagnosed with ASD. It is five times more common among boys than girls.

Registrants for the conference are from all over Florida as well as neighboring states, with many taking advantage of additional online modules provided by IBCCES in advance of the conference. While the optional

courses are specific to teaching students with autism, the one-day conference in July hosts sessions on pediatric anxiety, ADHD, universal learning designs for varying exceptionalities, inclusive recreation and physical education, support program administration for both K-8 and High School, and most importantly, the ministry of inclusion as catechists working to inspire, teach and develop each unique child of God.

The conference website is [www.certifiedautismcenter.com/catholic-educator-conference](http://www.certifiedautismcenter.com/catholic-educator-conference).

For more information, please contact Kelly Weedon Noda at [877-717-6543 ext 6](tel:877-717-6543).

### **About IBCCES**

In 2001, IBCCES (International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards) first established the industry standards for a Certified Autism Specialist. IBCCES leading standards are now used by organizations all over the world to ensure the highest quality of care and training for professionals in the field of Autism, with a goal to develop an army of highly trained and certified professionals who can improve the quality of life and education for individuals with Autism.

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