



Call for Papers

Arizona's 2026 IDEA Conference: *Stronger Systems, Better Outcomes—for Every Student*

August 18–20, 2026

Grand Hyatt Scottsdale Resort

The Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services (ADE/ESS) is soliciting proposals for breakout sessions for Arizona's 2026 IDEA Conference. This year's theme, **Stronger Systems, Better Outcomes—for Every Student**, reflects the critical role of robust coordinated systems in driving meaningful outcomes for students with disabilities. We welcome sessions that showcase practical strategies, data-driven approaches, and demonstrate how strong systems can reduce barriers and truly serve every student.

Session Topics

The 2026 conference will feature numerous professional learning opportunities addressing content such as IDEA legal issues and updates, instructional practices, national trends and hot topics, special education compliance, preschool special education, and secondary transition. The audience for this cross-stakeholder event includes special education administrative staff, youth and young adults with disabilities, family members and caregivers, state agency staff, educators, related service providers, and community members who share a commitment to positive student outcomes.

Sessions will focus on these topics:

- Assistive technology
- Behavior and mental health support for needs of students with disabilities
- Career and technical education programs
- Collaboration with related service providers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, school psychologists, and other personnel
- College and career competencies
- Community engagement and independent living

- Developing and supporting local stakeholder collaborations
- Dropout prevention
- Early and intentional student/family engagement in the IEP process
- Early childhood special education
- Guardianship, Supported Decision Making, and other legal options
- Health care or medical issues, including the transition to adult healthcare for youth with special health care needs
- High expectations across educational environments
- Impact of federal and state regulatory and policy changes
- Inclusive practices for students with disabilities
- Instructional practices, including evidence-based and high-leverage practices
- Job skills development, including “soft skills”
- Person-centered planning
- Recruitment and retention
- Resources, services, and supports for students and their family members after graduation
- Secure care
- Self-determination, self-advocacy, and skill-building
- Services and activities
- Special education leadership
- Special populations and low-incidence disability supports
- Strength-based decision-making
- Student/peer mentoring
- Success stories: student, family/caregiver, educator, provider, and/or employer perspectives from an individual or systems lens
- Universal Design for Learning and/or employment
- Work experiences, including volunteering, internships, paid employment, and work-based programs

Proposal Review Process

Proposals must identify the primary topical strand the session is intended to address. Sessions must incorporate strategies and interventions, involve active participation of the audience, and include adequate time for reflection and sharing. **Your session description must be content specific, complete, clearly written, and it must also accurately reflect the material to be presented to your audience.** If your proposal is selected, the session description you submit will be used in the conference program, so the description must be **no longer than 250 words.**

Please note: All session proposals submitted through the Call for Papers process are subject to review and approval by ADE leadership. Arizona’s IDEA Conference Planning Committee reserves the right to edit session titles and descriptions to allow for accuracy, consistency, and clarity in all conference materials.

Arizona’s IDEA Conference Planning Committee will review all submissions based on the following criteria:

- The degree to which the proposal clearly addresses one or more of the identified conference strands
- Clear identification of what the participants will know and take away as a result of their attendance at the session
- Relevance of session content to the intended audience(s)
- The degree to which the proposal reflects evidence-based or promising practice
- The degree to which the proposal has practical application and demonstrated results for the intended audience(s)

Important Details:

Accessible Presentations and Session Materials

ADE/ESS strives to make the IDEA Conference an inclusive experience for all participants. This includes developing accessible presentations and session materials. Materials will be posted in the Guidebook application for participants to access during and after the conference. By submitting a proposal, you agree to make your presentation and session materials fully accessible prior sending to ADE if accepted. A presentation template will be provided and required for all presenters. Inaccessible session materials may be returned for edits or will not be posted to the Guidebook application. Paper copies of session materials will not be provided by ADE. Resources to support the design of accessible materials will be available on the [IDEA Conference Presenter Hub website](#).

Person-First Language

Submitted proposals must be written using person-first language, including titles and session descriptions. Person-first language puts the person before the disability or category. An example of person-first language is “students with disabilities” versus “disabled students.”

Presenter Registration

If your session is accepted, you and any co-presenters must register online individually. A limit of three presenters total is requested (e.g., one lead presenter and up to two co-presenters). All co-presenters must be listed in the Call for Papers application. All presenters planning to stay for the duration of the conference will receive a discount registration fee. Presenters only attending the conference to present their session(s) are exempt from paying the conference registration fee.

Presenter Technology

Each room will be equipped with a projector, screen, and microphones. To ensure all participants have access to sessions, microphones are required by all presenters. You must provide your own laptop and/or tablet, which you will connect to the projector available in your assigned room. You will also need to provide any additional technology or devices such as DVI-VGA adaptors for Mac computers, presentation clickers, cables to connect iPads, etc. Please save your presentation in multiple places, such as on a Flash Drive, Microsoft SharePoint, Google Drive, Dropbox, etc. to have a backup. You also need to provide any additional materials such as Post-it notes, large sticky notes, markers, etc.

Session Length

All breakout sessions are 75 minutes in length.

Important Dates:

March 4, 2026: Deadline for proposal submission; online [completion of the “Call for Papers” application](#).

By May 22, 2026: Notification of acceptance of proposal.

July 1, 2026: Accessible presentation and session materials due to ADE.

Resources for Presenters:

Please [visit the IDEA Conference Presenter Hub](#) website to stay updated on important information for presenters. This website also includes guidance documents and training resources that will support the development of accessible presentations and session materials.

Please [send questions to the IDEA Conference inbox](#).

Thank you for your consideration.