

**Join us from August 21-22, 2025,
at the JW Marriott Desert Ridge
in Phoenix.**

**Check out this highlight of
national speakers and exciting
topics for this year's conference.**

Keynote Speakers

Jessica Cox

Jessica Cox is a motivational speaker featured on TV shows like Ellen, CNN, National Geographic, Fox and Friends, and BBC News. Her speaking career spans 18 years, 28 countries, and audiences of up to 40,000 people. Companies like AT&T, NASA, the Smithsonian, State Farm, and Cisco have asked her for inspirational workshops, keynotes, and more.



Jessica was born without arms and uses her feet the way most people use their hands. Jessica grew up asking with frustration and anger, “Why me? Why do I have to be different?” She learned to see the blessings in her life and accept herself as a whole person. Now, Jessica flies airplanes, drives cars, is married, and otherwise lives a normal life.

Jessica is the author of *Disarm Your Limits*, an autobiographical self-help book that has sold more than 10,000 copies. She also writes a monthly article for Flying Magazine. In 2020, Jessica announced plans to build The Impossible Airplane, a custom 200 mph, 4 seat airplane she will use to circumnavigate the world. When she’s not flying off into the sunset, Jessica continues to train in Taekwondo, where she’s a Fourth Degree Black Belt.

Shawn Harper

Shawn Harper is a former NFL offensive lineman turned successful entrepreneur and nationally recognized motivational speaker. Once labeled “most likely to fail,” he defied the odds—overcoming learning disabilities and a 1.62 GPA to play 7 years in the NFL with teams like the Rams and Colts.



Today, he’s the CEO of a multi-million dollar security firm and author of the best-seller *The Winning Edge*. Known as the “Winologist,” Shawn empowers corporations, students, and leaders to shift from success to winning through mindset transformation. His nonprofit, For The Next Gen, inspires youth nationwide to rise above obstacles and choose greatness.

Brandon K. Wright

Brandon K. Wright is an attorney in Illinois who concentrates his practice in K-12 special education law, serving as legal counsel to school districts and special education cooperatives throughout Illinois.



Brandon spends a significant amount of time providing professional development and continuing education opportunities across the country. He has trained administrators and teachers about managing legal issues involving students with disabilities and other school law concerns, having presented to educational professionals in 26 states (and counting). Brandon serves on the Executive Committee of the Illinois Council of School Attorneys and is a past Chair. He has previously taught as an adjunct faculty member at Southern Illinois University and Eastern Illinois.



A full conference agenda will be posted online during the summer.

Access Cultivates Opportunity

Elizabeth Montero-Cefalo

Elizabeth Montero-Cefalo is a talented trainer and speaker with 25+ years of experience working with children who present varying exceptionalities. Her classroom was recognized as a Conscious Discipline model classroom by Dr. Becky Bailey and the Miami-Dade County Public School District. Elizabeth’s commitment to Conscious Discipline and her ability to share her expertise with others led to her role as Certified Instructor. Elizabeth graduated from the University of Miami with a master’s in early childhood special education.



As a trainer, Elizabeth assists teachers and administrators in deepening their understanding of Conscious Discipline and adapting it to working with students with physical and emotional disabilities, students with neurotypical and neurodivergent issues (some without formal diagnosis or accommodations), and students with different learning styles. As a coach, she guides teachers through a manageable, step-by-step process of internalizing the skills and powers of Conscious Discipline. Elizabeth is dedicated to finding ways to connect with all children.

Exciting Topics

This year's conference will feature numerous professional learning opportunities, including IDEA legal issues, instructional practices, national trends and hot topics, special education compliance, preschool and secondary transition, and content for related service providers.

Learn with experts from around Arizona

- Arizona Department of Education/Exceptional Student Services units
- Other Arizona Department of Education teams
- Agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Encircle Families, Diverse Ability Incorporated, Sonoran UCEDD, Arizona school districts, and more
- Session tracks for youths/young adults with disabilities and family members/caregivers
- Community partners and vendors/exhibitors tables

Exciting Spotlights


Secondary Transition Services Awards

Join ADE/ESS in recognizing a youth/young adult, a community member, and educators for their secondary transition contributions and successes.

★ **Awards will be presented on the morning of Friday, August 22.**

Student and Young Adult Art Exhibit

ADE/ESS is proud to display unique works of art created by talented Arizona students (pre-school through high school) and young adults (up to 22 years of age) during the 2025 IDEA Conference.

 Featured art created by Ulrik W. from Center for Academic Success, Sierra Vista



Stay up-to-date on the IDEA Conference website for announcements about additional national speakers and exciting events. Please send questions to the IDEA Conference inbox.