



Researching Learning Challenges Competition

Overview

The Researching Learning Challenges competition focuses on disabilities outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). During the 2022–2023 school year, approximately 7.5 million students ages 3–21 received special education and/or related services under IDEA, representing 15 percent of all public school students. Participants will delve deeply into one specific disability selected for this year's competition, aiming to develop thoughtful recommendations for effective educational support systems. (Citation: <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg>).

The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) recognizes the following disability categories and eligibility considerations for students receiving special education services:

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|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Autism | 9. Orthopedic impairment |
| 2. Deaf-blindness | 10. Other health impairment |
| 3. Deafness | 11. Specific learning disability (e.g., dyslexia) |
| 4. Developmental delay* | 12. Speech or language impairment |
| 5. Emotional disturbance | 13. Traumatic brain injury |
| 6. Hearing impairment | 14. Visual impairment, including blindness |
| 7. Intellectual disability | |
| 8. Multiple disabilities | |
- *Developmental delay may be used for children ages 3 through 9, or a subset of that age range, in accordance with state criteria.

This year's competition focuses on deafness.

Deafness can affect a student's access to communication, instruction, and social interaction in the school environment. Students who are deaf may experience challenges in several areas:

- Communication and Language Access: Difficulty accessing spoken instruction, classroom discussions, and interactions with teachers and peers.
- Academic Access: Students may require supports such as captioning, interpreters, assistive technology, visual materials, or other accommodations to fully access instruction.
- Social and Emotional Inclusion: Communication barriers may affect classroom participation, peer relationships, and a student's sense of belonging.

According to the CDC, approximately 1.7 out of every 1,000 babies screened in 2022 were identified with permanent hearing loss.

Citations:

[IDEA Regulations — Sec. 300.8, Child with a Disability](#)

[CDC — Data and Statistics About Hearing Loss in Children](#)



Researching Learning Challenges Competition

The purpose of this competition is to work collaboratively and gain a deeper understanding of deafness and to develop a research-supported presentation that explains and advocates for positive practices in schools to support students who are deaf. Imagine that the local school board has asked you: “What specific steps should we take to support the education of students who are deaf? Also, why should we accept your recommendations?”

Students are encouraged to engage in comprehensive research utilizing both traditional and primary sources. This includes conducting interviews with individuals affected by the selected disability and professionals in relevant fields. Teams will collaboratively analyze their findings to develop a cohesive set of recommendations.

Each chapter must collaboratively prepare an 8- to 10-minute presentation supported by thorough research. Subsequently, they will nominate two to four students to deliver their findings and propose best practices to a panel of judges onsite.

Participation Details

- This is a chapter competition.
- Only one (1) entry per chapter will be accepted.
- A maximum of four (4) entries total will be accepted, on a first-come, first-served basis.

The guidelines for the FIU Researching Learning Challenges Competition are adapted from the national Educators Rising competition guidelines and are used for educational purposes. All credit for the original competition structure, objectives, and evaluation criteria goes to Educators Rising. FIU's adaptations are intended to align with our institutional context and support student success within our programs.



Researching Learning Challenges Competition

Competition Guidelines

- A. Team members will use the information collected in the research phase to collaborate in creating a slide-deck presentation (ex., PowerPoint, Prezi).

(MLA, APA, or Chicago style is acceptable).
- B. The presentation should complement and deliver the team's research findings and recommendations.
- C. The slide deck presentation must include the following:
 - a. A title slide with the title of the project and school/chapter name,
 - b. A credit slide with the names of the student creators, sponsoring teacher(s), and the source of any non-original, multimedia elements (images and sounds), and
 - c. At least three sources of relevant information in a works cited slide
- D. At the FEA Regional Conference, two to four members must present the chapter's research and recommendations to a panel of expert judges using the slide deck as their visual aid. FEA at FIU will provide the laptop, LCD projector, and screen for the competition. Team members should bring their slide deck file on a USB drive.
- E. The presentation must not exceed 10 minutes. Team members should be prepared to answer questions and have a discussion with the judges.
- F. Team members will receive a visual, non-verbal indication that one minute remains when they reach the nine-minute mark of their presentation.

Judging and Scoring

- A. Competitors must be present at the scheduled time; otherwise, they will be disqualified.
- B. The judges' decision is final.
- C. Contestants agree to be bound by the FEA General Competition Rules.
- D. The entry will be scored using the Researching Learning Challenges Competition rubric.

How to Enter

- A. This is a chapter competition. Only one (1) entry per chapter will be accepted.
- B. All entries for individual and/or chapter competitions must be submitted by the chapter's sponsoring teacher via the Online Competition Entry Form **by 5:00 pm on Friday, October 30, 2026.**
- C. Four (4) entries total will be accepted for this competition. Entries will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.
- D. Entries submitted by email will not be accepted.



Researching Learning Challenges Competition

Presentation and Q&A

Points Available	Accomplished 16 – 13	Commendable 12 – 9	Developing 8 – 5	Needs Improvement 4 – 1
Content of Slide Deck	The content of the slides reflects professional-caliber thoughtfulness and thoroughness. The team members expertly leverage the visual medium to bring out key insights and recommendations with clarity.	The commendable, student-level quality of the content of the slides reflects a commitment to sharing key facts and details of the team members' insights and recommendations.	The content of the slides reflects compliance but minimal insight. The images employed may be basic or not entirely effective at amplifying the team's messages.	The content of the slides reflects inconsistent focus and quality. The images or text may distract the audience from the team's intended messages, or the message may lack focus.
Depth & Insight	The content of the presentation reflects professional caliber, in-depth understanding, and striking insight into all elements of the issue. The excellent depth of research and preparation is clearly apparent throughout the presentation.	The content of the presentation offers helpful, well-detailed ideas that warrant further exploration beyond this session. The presentation may explore many but not all key facets of the issue.	The presentation offers basic, intuitive ideas that would have benefited from further unpacking in this session. Some material may be superficial or reflect limited research. The presentation may not thoroughly explore all the issues or perspectives at play in the scenario.	The presentation may offer ideas that are flawed, illogical, or partially developed and feel incomplete. Few perspectives or issues are explored in the scenario.
Depth of Research	The presentation provides informed, evidence-based recommendations by referencing at least three well-chosen sources of relevant information.	The presentation makes recommendations that correlate with the research referenced. The presentation may reference fewer than three sources, or the source material may not directly correlate to the presentation's central purpose.	The presentation makes limited connections to relevant research.	The presentation makes virtually no connection to relevant research.



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Presentation and Q&A

Points Available	Accomplished 16 – 13	Commendable 12 – 9	Developing 8 – 5	Needs Improvement 4 – 1
Q & A Discussion	The students' responses in the Q&A session demonstrated consistent thoughtfulness and professional-caliber insight, rooted in the deep experience of the material. The students display impressive, professional-level depth of knowledge and understanding given his/her experience and research.	The students' responses in the Q&A session demonstrated thoughtfulness and reflected successful attempts to address most of the material posed to them. The students demonstrate a substantive knowledge and understanding of the selected topic, based on their experience and research.	The students' responses in the Q&A session reflected a broad spectrum of quality, depth, and insight from answer to answer.	The students' responses in the Q&A session may reflect evident effort and passion, but are inconsistent in terms of depth, accuracy, understanding, and insight offered.
Overall Impact	The presentation reflects professional-caliber and highly persuasive recommendations via a deep exploration of the issue and context. The presentation content & delivery effectively complement each other to craft a highly impactful, professional-caliber experience.	The content and delivery work together to offer a largely persuasive presentation. With deeper research, more realistic proposals, or revisions to delivery, the project could be considered of professional caliber.	The minimally persuasive presentation does demonstrate effort. At multiple points, the depth or strategy related to content or delivery may reflect a partial understanding of key facets of the issue.	The unpersuasive presentation demonstrates inconsistent, unprofessional, or superficial aspects in content or delivery. The audience is frequently distracted from the intended impact by aspects of the content or delivery.