

UNDER CONSTRUCTION...BUILDING THE *Dream.*

ANNUAL REPORT

**2018-
2019**



NorthFloridaSchool
Of Special Education

Enhance. Empower. Enlighten.

MISSION STATEMENT

To discover and foster each student's unique abilities revealing their highest potential within an engaged community.

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*On the cover: Bert Brown, Vice President,
NFSSE Board of Directors and
Sally Hazelip, Head of School*

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD AND HEAD OF SCHOOL

The 2018-2019 school year was one of dreams coming true. We dreamed...you helped make our dream come true. Thank you for being a part of the North Florida School of Special Education community.

We dreamed of an expanded campus to enroll additional students into specialized education and to serve the greater community through equine therapy and other recreation and therapeutic programs. Parents, supporters and philanthropists believed in this vision and invested over \$6 million to make groundbreaking possible. Now, together, we are ***Under Construction...Building the Dream*** of the Christy and Lee Smith Lower School Campus and Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center.

We dreamed of a mobile market that would bring fresh, organic produce into urban food deserts. The SNAP/EBT program recognized the validity of Berry Good Farms, and together we provided 396 Berry Good Farms fresh meals to low income residents throughout Northeast Florida.

We dreamed of establishing a weekend festival that would celebrate the spirit of community through the power of food. This dream was realized when over 1,000 guests stepped onto our campus during Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival. We were touched by the presence and support of so many new and old friends.

Daily we strive to live out the dream of state-of-the-art education for students with unique needs to enhance, empower, and enlighten them to become the best versions of themselves. Governor DeSantis shares this vision and recognized NFSSE as "the gold standard" when he visited our campus twice to announce increased funding for the Andy Gardiner Scholarship program.

We pinch ourselves daily because of community partners and supporters like you who have come alongside us to build a strong foundation for children and young adults with intellectual and developmental differences. We hope you will plan to attend our ribbon cutting ceremony on January 16, 2020.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and students, thank you for ***building dreams*** with us.



John Macdonald
President, Board of Directors



Sally Hazelip
Head of School

INSPIRING THE *Dream.*



“As a parent of a child with intellectual differences I have been told many times by doctors and therapists that time is of the essence. Providing necessary services for my son without delay is essential in increasing his chances of leading a more independent and fulfilling life. I was also told that when it comes to autism there are no guarantees and it is hard to predict with certainty how effective any given therapy or treatment will be. However, one thing that is certain, is the feeling of guilt and regret about the things I was unable to provide him. The “what ifs” ringing in my head when I look back.

I know that progress for my son is not measured by “curing” him but by helping him take small steps towards independence. I know that, at the very best, hard work and perseverance leads to him reaching milestones that other children reach seemingly without effort. I also know how important it is to have the right educational setting. We were overjoyed when North Florida School of Special Education agreed to take our son, as we firmly believed that he needed a much more focused and individualized learning environment...not to make things easier for him, but to make them possible. I am impressed every day with the hard work, dedication and compassion displayed by his teachers and school staff. I now know, that this will be one “what if” I will not have to worry about.”

Adam Blaszkiewicz, NFSSE parent

Robbie Blaszkiewicz, NFSSE Student

RE-ACCREDITATION BY FLORIDA COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (FCIS)



“The committee was impressed with the school’s preparation for our visit and the attention given to the development of the whole person.”

**Barbara Hodges, Executive Director,
Florida Council of Independent Schools**



Every five years, North Florida School of Special Education scrubs and polishes each physical surface and underlying educational standard with great anticipation for re-accreditation by the Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS). The preparation process was extensive, but accreditation positions us for future growth that is focused and intentional. Through FCIS we completed a strategic plan with board members, staff, parents, and community stakeholders. We examined our core values including community involvement and replication of services. In February, a FCIS Team evaluated NFSSE and granted full accreditation for another five years. With FCIS credentials, NFSSE exceeds rigorous standards for financial stability and quality education.



THE MEASURE — “THE GOLD STANDARD”



Governor Ron DeSantis chose North Florida School of Special Education to hold two press conferences this year! In February, he announced his plan to eliminate the waiting list for the Andy Gardiner Scholarship, and in May he returned with Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nunez, former Senate President Andy Gardiner, and many area legislators to celebrate success. NFSSE students, board members, and staff welcomed the Governor and dignitaries with posters and applause. Parents shared heartfelt remarks about the impact of NFSSE and the Andy Gardiner scholarship program. NFSSE would not be where we are today without the Gardiner and McKay Scholarships. We believe all children deserve educational opportunities that enhance, enlighten, and empower them to become the best versions of themselves. Thank you Governor DeSantis for believing in our children.



“North Florida School of Special Education is the gold standard.”

**Governor Ron DeSantis,
February 4, 2019 Press Conference**



Dream Big

“Ella is thriving at North Florida School of Special Education. During her time at NFSSE, Ella’s communication and expression has improved tremendously. She also continues to progress in her reading as well as in her ability to manage her emotions when challenged with a difficult situation. She is becoming more independent and it has been rewarding to watch her develop meaningful friendships with fellow classmates. I am certain that the faculty and staff care deeply for Ella and their love and devotion have largely contributed to her growth. We can’t imagine a better place for her!”

Scott and Michele Achtemeier

“North Florida School of Special Education has created a framework that all schools should model. Our experience at NFSSE has been nothing short of remarkable. Although I genuinely believe that every child’s learning experience should be as exceptional as NFSSE has offered, unfortunately that is not the case. As parents, we are extremely grateful and thrilled with all that is offered at our amazing school and the growth we’ve seen in our equally amazing son, Liam. Having peace of mind when your child is not in your own care is truly priceless. I know that at NFSSE he is being loved, protected, challenged and prepared. What more could a parent ask for?”

Dawaun and Shenera Smith

Ella Achtemeier and Liam Smith, NFSSE Students

THE FOUNDATION—ACADEMICS, ART, MUSIC, PE, THERAPY, VOCATIONAL TRAINING



*"I love my friends and my teachers.
Music club and Dad's Club, too.
My school is fun!"*

Reed Veres, NFSSE Student



At NFSSE, our faculty and staff are committed to providing a comprehensive, individualized education plan for each student that meets his or her needs and sets realistic goals for success. This includes academics, art, music, PE, therapy and many projects throughout the year to provide a rich, innovative foundation on which students can build their future. Because no one specific path to success can be prescribed to our students, we emphasize cultivating relationships in the classroom and learn to celebrate our differences, and accomplish our goals together.



BLUEPRINT FOR A FUTURE—TRANSITION AND POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMS



Education does not end with graduation. Young adults, over 18 years of age continue through NFSSE's transition and post-graduate programs. Life and job skills and vocational training opportunities are offered through NFSSE Berry Good Farms, Berry Good Farms On The Go, Mobile Market, Berry Good Café at The Arc Village, Barkin' Biscuits, and Art with Soul. In addition, over 25 local business partners provide internships for post-graduates. NFSSE believes there is a job for everyone. We are committed to identifying their skills and talents to best match employment opportunities.



"We love NFSSE for all the wonderful programs and opportunities for him to grow, learn, and achieve to become a better man and have better life skills."

Kim and Jim, NFSSE Parents

JOB SITES

BEAM
Bonos BBQ
Brightway Insurance
Burlington Coat
Factory
Chick-fil-A
Goodwill Industries of
Northeast Florida
Hope's Closet
Jacksonville Humane
Society
Jacksonville Jaguars
Jacksonville Public
Library
Jacksonville Zoo
Jax 4 Kids
Longhorn Steakhouse

MOSH
Pet Paradise
Publix Super Markets-
Neptune Beach
Publix Super Markets-
Southside/Deerwood
Rad Dog
Sawgrass Nutri Labs
St. Mark's Episcopal
Day School
Step Up For Students
Sulzbacher Center
We Rock the Spectrum

Dream Creatively

“Matthew has a delightful spirit. He is happy, curious, and committed to his work. In art class Matthew perseveres to create intentional designs that he is proud to share. He always has a smile on his face and a dance in his step.”

Grace Williams, NFSSE Art Teacher

Matthew Knox, NFSSE Student

GROUNDBREAKING—BUILDING THE *Dream*



Through the generous outpouring of the Jacksonville community, NFSSE raised enough funds to start building the dream. In February 2019, families, students, board members, community leaders, philanthropists, staff and friends gathered in a heartfelt groundbreaking ceremony using all five senses to celebrate the past and look forward to a bright future.

Mayor Lenny Curry shared the moment by singing the school song, and First Lady Molly read the “NFSSE Giving Tree.” NFSSE treated guests to a visual representation of the campus expansion, complete with a student arriving on horseback. The ceremony concluded with donors, staff, board members, and each class breaking ground with golden shovels.



We eagerly await the completion of our new campus in January 2020. The 32,000 square foot **Christy and Lee Smith Lower School Campus and Therapeutic Center** will house the

- Linda and David Stein Academic Complex
- DuBow Family Physical Education Complex
- Chartrand Family Culinary Arts Complex
- Dostie Family Basketball Court
- Fine Arts Center gifted by Jill and Charlie Arnold

The **Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center**, including the **Dorothy and Lee Thomas Barn** will be the first urban equestrian program in Jacksonville offering equine therapy to NFSSE students during the day and to the community during after school hours and weekends.

At NFSSE, we believe that no dream is too big, and we are committed to inviting our community to continue to grow with us as we step into the light of our full potential.



GRADUATION 2019



11 Students Graduated

7 Graduates Employed

"Charlie Chaplin said, 'You'll never find a rainbow if you're looking down.' So I want to encourage all of you to look up, look ahead, see beyond yourself...be present to celebrate this spectacular moment while anticipating joy for tomorrow." ~ Grace Williams, NFSSE Art Teacher, Commencement Address

In May, we celebrated the graduation of 11 Seniors. They all worked diligently to learn independent living skills and participated in intensive job readiness programs during their time at NFSSE. As a result, seven graduated with employment! We are proud of all our graduates—whether they have jobs, are seeking jobs, or returning in our post-graduate programs.



NFSSE FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Heart of the Runway with Honorary Chairs, Elli Zimmerman and Chase Zimmerman

Students from NFSSE showcased fashion, art, and culinary creations to over 200 patrons at the annual Heart of the Runway Fashion Show and Luncheon on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2019, at Linda Cunningham Boutique. At the heart of this event was a story of love around the world and the love between a mother and son. Amid the stunning spring fashions of Linda Cunningham and Dillard's, Sarah Brown, mother of 10-year-old Ben, a NFSSE student, shared her family's experience of life with Ben and his extra 'love' chromosome. "Ben seems to have a keen awareness of who needs love and shares it unconditionally," said Brown. "He doesn't just reserve it for people he knows. He doesn't test the 'love' waters. He 'belly flops' right in!" Guests were delighted by the lovely afternoon and responded with great generosity.



Tee Up for NFSSE

UpTOWN Civitan hosted Tee Up for North Florida School of Special Education. Emcee Vic Micolucci, of News4Jax, kept the event lively and shared his heart for the mission of North Florida School of Special Education. We are thankful for community partnerships such as Uptown Civitan who support NFSSE.



Designed To Shine hosted by Dillard's St. Johns Town Center

Designed To Shine fashion show featured students from NFSSE alongside their buddies from Night To Shine Jacksonville Collaboration, which hosts an annual prom for those with IDD's (intellectual and developmental differences). Children and young adults with IDD's joined typical students from area high schools and Dillard's St. Johns Town Center models to walk the runway in a joyful celebration of friendship and fashion.



NFSSE FUNDRAISING EVENTS CONTINUED

Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival

The April showers held off for NFSSE to welcome over 1,000 guests on campus at our inaugural Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival, April 5-7, 2019. The weekend gave guests three options to experience the spirit of community through the power of food.

Farm to Family, featuring Black Sheep Group, delighted children and adults with games, a petting zoo, live music, dancing, and more. Farm to Tap gave patrons unlimited tasting of local breweries and bites, with VIP's enjoying Top Chef Kenny Gilbert's upscale offering. Nashville recording artist, Alexandra Demetree returned to her hometown for a live performance. Manifest Distilling created signature cocktails throughout the weekend.

The weekend concluded with our signature event, Dinner on the Farm. This elegant, farm-to-table dining experience was chaired by Jill and Charlie Arnold and catered by Chef Matthew Madure of M Hospitality Group, Chef Brett Swearingen of Berry Good Farms and NFSSE culinary students. At the butterfly-themed event, guests were inspired by the transformation of students and young adults at North Florida School of Special Education. The evening culminated with a butterfly release celebrating each student's unique path and unlimited potential.





A Pie or a Peck?

"A Pie or a Peck?" class crowdfunding contest culminated with Sally Hazelip, head of school, and Ciaran Sontag, music teacher, kissing a "mystery celebrity hen" or receiving a pie to the face— per each winning class' choosing. Students and parents were surprised and delighted when they learned the mystery celebrity hen, "Red", belongs to Jacksonville's first lady Molly Curry and her family.

Sally Hazelip and Ciaran Sontag were good sports as the students didn't hold back in delivering whip cream pies with dramatic flair. Mrs. Curry and Red were also recipients of some friendly whip cream fire. Red had her fair share of pecks, too. All agreed it was worth the pies and pecks to see the joy in the students' faces. This event kicked-off the Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival.



WHAT A Year!



NFSSE AT A GLANCE FY 2018–2019

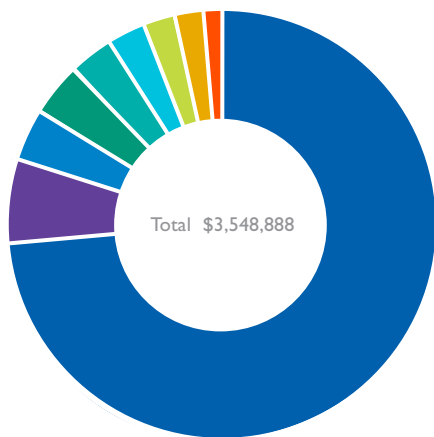
120 Students
ages 6 to 18

41 Transition Students
ages 18 to 22

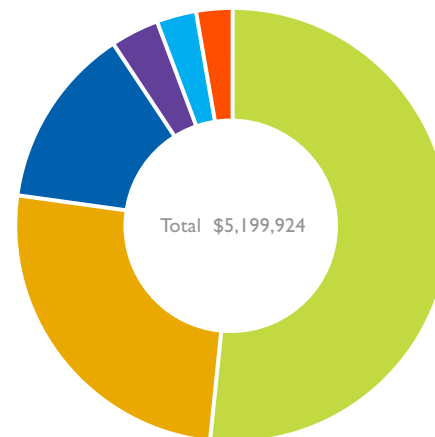
63 Post-graduates
22 years of age and older

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS FY 2018–2019

Expense Summary
2018–2019



Income Summary
2018–2019



Insurance	1.9%	Depreciation Expenses	4.1%
Office/Admin Expenses	2.3%	Program Expenses	4.1%
Berry Good Farms Expenses	3.2%	Fundraising Expenses	4.8%
Curriculum Expenses	3.4%	Salaries & Benefits	72.6%
Financial Assistance	3.6%		

Grant Income	4.2%	Fundraising Income	10.6%
In-kind Contributions	4.8%	Capital Campaign	25.0%
Berry Good Farms Income	5.0%	Tuition & Fees Income	50.4%

Josh Sweetman, Cole Shilling, Alek Drysdale, Nick Mueller, Josiah Middleton, Christian Roberts, and Jake Scovill, NFSSE Students

Dream Boldly

With gratitude to all who support North Florida School of Special Education through time, talents and resources. We are grateful to all our donors, grants, foundations, partners and volunteers!



Will Phelan, Kordell Lee, Colin Horn, Christopher Frierson, Evie Schellenberg and Maddie Mottas, NFSSE Students

UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS



APRIL 3, 4 & 5, 2020—NFSSE Campus

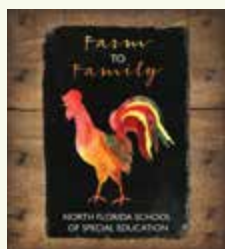
The Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival dishes up a culinary weekend filled with live music and entertainment, delicious fare prepared by Jacksonville's trend-setting chefs, craft beer from local breweries, and an alfresco dinner paired with wine. The three-day fundraising event is the school's innovative collective effort to support the programs of North Florida School of Special Education by celebrating the spirit of community with the power of food.



Preview Party
Tuesday, February 11, 2020

Heart of the Runway
Thursday, February 13, 2020

At the Heart of the Runway Fashion Show & Luncheon, students and community models showcase fashion, art, and culinary creations while guests enjoy a luncheon amid the couture fashions at Linda Cunningham.



Farm to Family
Friday, April 3, 2020



Farm to Tap
Saturday, April 4, 2020



Dinner on the Farm
Sunday, April 5, 2020