



Implementing Policies to Advance Children and Youth With Disabilities and/or Gifts and Talents

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international community of educators who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. CEC's 40,000 members – who include special/gifted education teachers, administrators, higher education faculty, researchers, and related service personnel – work daily on behalf of America's 10 million children and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. From this frontline perspective, CEC is pleased to share its priority issues to aid in the preparation and implementation of the incoming Administration's education and disability proposals.

Integrate Special Education within Education Policy Proposals

CEC members were pleased to see an emphasis on early childhood and special education programs in the Obama-Biden campaign literature as investments in both programs enable children and youth to have the necessary tools to aid in their development and education.

Moving forward, CEC strongly encourages a full integration of special education positions within education policy positions, instead of simply including special education in the area of disability policy. CEC believes that students with disabilities are general education students first and therefore, education policies must address the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. Furthermore, CEC believes that a coordinated, collaborative approach to general and special education is critical for the success of all students and should, therefore, be modeled by the U.S. Department of Education in its approach to providing all students with a high quality education.

Administrative Opportunities

- **U.S. Department of Education**
 - **Publish the final regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Act – Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities Program (Part C):** Families, state agencies, early intervention service programs and providers have been awaiting the release of final regulations since amendments were made to IDEA in 1997, despite two reauthorizations of IDEA. The final Part C regulations will provide needed guidance to those implementing IDEA, and therefore will benefit infant and toddlers with disabilities and their families who are served under Part C.
 - **Rescind 11th Hour Bush Administration Proposal for Changes to the IDEA State Performance Report/Annual Performance Review (SPP/APR):** CEC has significant concerns about the balance between the proposed increase in data collection/reporting requirements and the emphasis IDEA 2004 placed on increased positive results for children, youth and families. By continuing to impose new data collection requirements, state and local resources are being diverted from services to children and youth. While CEC strongly believes in accountability and full implementation of IDEA, it believes that the collection of data is not the preferred method to measure positive outcomes. Other methods such as technical assistance and training on evidence based practices must be explored to ensure fidelity of implementation.



- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
 - **Issue an Administrative Solution to Ensure School Based/Early Intervention Health Services Remain Covered by Medicaid:** Ensure that the provision of medical services provided through Medicaid to children and youth with disabilities by school districts and early intervention programs remain in tact by supporting a permanent solution to prevent the implementation of regulations that seek to cut or eliminate reimbursement for targeted case management, rehabilitation services, transportation and administrative claiming for Medicaid-eligible children with disabilities. If enacted, these regulations would shift financial responsibility to states totaling approximately \$7 billion over five years. The current moratorium expires on April 1, 2009.

Legislative Opportunities

Provide a Budget that Increases the Investment in Special/Gifted Education

- **Dramatically Increase Funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:** Fulfill Congress' 33 year-old promise to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), rejecting three decades of stagnant funding that has failed to keep pace with program growth/need and inflation and make IDEA funding mandatory. A substantial increase in funding is necessary for IDEA programs that invest in the early years which lays the foundation for future social and cognitive development (Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities Program (Part C), IDEA Preschool Program (Part B-Sec. 619). Additionally, increased funding is needed to reverse years of cuts to IDEA Support Programs (Part D), which provide critical infrastructure, training, and research necessary to drive improvements in special education practice.
- **Increase Investment in Gifted Education:** In 2007, less than three cents out of every \$100 of the federal K-12 education budget was devoted to our nation's students with gifts and talents, leaving the only small federal program dedicated to identifying, serving and building capacity to support gifted education chronically underfunded. Furthermore, this program -- the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act -- has been cut by 30% since 2005, leaving current funding at \$7.5 million.

Provide Leadership for Policies that Address the Educational/Developmental Needs of All Students and the Professionals Who Work on Their Behalf

- **Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):** Support CEC's recommendations for ESEA reauthorization which include:
 - Ensuring students with disabilities and/or gifts and talents are meaningfully included in assessment and accountability systems within local, state and federal education systems
 - Accountability systems reward quality school performance and seek to improve poor school performance
 - Schools that have a well prepared, diverse, and successful educational workforce
 - Schools that are fully funded to achieve success
 - Systems that are carefully coordinated and balanced between ESEA and IDEA to recognize and enhance the system for assessment and accountability for a



diverse population of children, including those with disabilities and/or gifts and talents

- **Initiating Policies to Enhance Early Childhood Education & Development for All Children:** Initiate policies that support research that has shown that investments made in early childhood development programs yield positive educational and societal benefits, especially for children with disabilities and their families. Addressing the needs of a child in the early years lays a foundation for future social and cognitive development.
- **Emphasize the Importance of Research in Education:** Support policies that enhance research in education to benefit all students, including children and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents from birth through age 21; effective instructional strategies; response to intervention; assessments for students with disabilities and/or gifts and talents; transition services and postsecondary opportunities for students with disabilities; and dropout rates. Currently, less than 1% of the total funding of IDEA is spent on special education research.
- **Support Policies that Address Personnel Shortages in Special/Gifted Education:** Address persistent personnel shortages in the recruitment, retention and professional development of special education professionals – including teachers, administrators, higher education faculty and researchers. Despite increases in the number of children and youth requiring special education services, personnel shortages for special education and related services professionals continue to exist.

As you prepare to address the dire economic situation, CEC encourages you to use this time as an opportunity to invest in education programs that will enable our country to regain its role as an economic leader and global competitor. Research has shown that an investment in our youth yields dividends for society as a whole.

CEC welcomes the opportunity to discuss how we can partner collaboratively toward the goal of ensuring better educational and developmental outcomes for children and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. CEC's website has numerous resources and policy recommendations for special and gifted education – www.cec.sped.org.

Selected CEC Resources:

- [CEC's ESEA Reauthorization Recommendations](#)
- [CEC's Campaign for Full Funding of IDEA](#)
- [CEC's Response to Intervention Position Statement](#)
- [About CEC](#)

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