

TO THE POINT

Unit Activities



**Council for
Exceptional
Children**

2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000

Arlington, VA 22202-3557

Toll Free: 888/232-7733

TTY: 866/915-5000

Fax: 703/264-9494

Web site: www.cec.sped.org

Updated 12/13/10

TO THE POINT

CONTENTS

3. Unit Activities

- 3.01 Guidelines for Planning Unit Activities
- 3.02 Needs Assessment Techniques for Planning Activities
- 3.03 Evaluating Unit Activities
- 3.04 Unit Activities “Sampler”
- 3.05 Unit Activities Focusing on Socio-Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Among Exceptional Children, Youth and Adults
- 3.06 Recognizing Special People Through Awards
- 3.07 Exceptional Children's Week
- 3.08 The CEC Children and Youth Action Network (CAN) and Facilitating State and Division Political Activity
- 3.09 Professional Standards
- 3.10 Fundraising
- 3.11 Newsletter Development
- 3.12 Public Relations

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.01 GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING UNIT ACTIVITIES

Unit activities—publication programs, workshops and conferences, networking events, or direct service activities—enhance the value of CEC membership. They give members the satisfaction associated with our work on behalf of children and youth with disabilities and/or who are gifted.

Guidelines for planning events include:

- **Select the Activity**
 - A. Focus on stepwise growth, not on perfection. Start with simple, short events, then build.
 - B. Set simple goals:
 - Determine one professional priority (e.g., IEP's, IDEA 2004, new professional practice, etc.)
 - Select one realistic goal (e.g., turn out five new faces, call attention to issue, etc.)
 - C. Be kind to yourself...PLAN EARLY:
 - Allow 6 weeks for a small social event.
 - Devote 4-6 months for a major professional meeting.

- **Implementation**
 - A. First, arrange any key speakers and get firm date commitments.
 - B. Send written notice to key speakers ("per our recent conversation"); DO NOT call to reconfirm—this gives an "out."
 - C. Take advantage of available resources within the unit and the community. Who has a meeting room you can use at no charge? Can someone's school print and mail the promotional flyers? Is there a local store that would donate coffee and donuts?
 - D. As early as possible, get commitments from volunteers; make volunteer assignments.
 - E. Begin to issue verbal and mailed invitations/announcements eight weeks prior to event.
 - F. Visit the facility. Mentally "walk-through" the entire event..."see" the coat rack capacity, how latecomers will get to their places, where materials and coffee will be placed, how many chairs will be needed for speakers.
 - G. Always prepare welcome materials including name badges, CEC membership materials, flyers on upcoming events, and a sign-in sheet.

- **Follow-up For Growth**
 - A. Send thank you notes to non-CEC VIP's such as elected officials or school board members. Give feedback on the significance of the event and your appreciation of their involvement.
 - B. Solicit feedback from the attendees. Invite to join CEC if not a CEC member.
 - C. Send the names and addresses of non-members to CEC to receive a membership invitation.
 - D. Save the list of attendees. You'll want to add them to your mailing list for future events.
 - E. When planning the next event, involve new members who joined after this event...they are the #1 source of new activists for your unit.
 - F. Evaluate the event to determine how it could be improved and to document what was effective.
 - G. Recognize and thank all those who helped or were involved.

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.02 NEEDS ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES FOR PLANNING ACTIVITIES

In order to plan and conduct activities in which people will participate, members' priorities, needs, and interests must be identified. This process of assessing member needs can occur in several different ways.

- A general survey form can be sent to members inquiring about major issues, teaching techniques, support services, etc., that they would like to discuss. This may be particularly effective for a recently organized unit or one that requires some revitalization.
- Distribute a brief evaluation form at the end of each meeting. It can address the applicability or value of the program. You may also ask what additional topics or activities interest the member.
- Ask new members about their interests, time available, special skills, and willingness to get involved, as well as their suggestions for program topics. This will help the unit in planning and in actively involving interested members in its activities.
- Telephone interviews of a randomly-selected group of members (as few as 5-8) can uncover a lot. Be sure to call members who are not officers to get the most helpful information. Then add the new information to the perceptions and interests of your officers.

Guidelines for good practices in needs assessment include:

- Needs assessment should be an ongoing process. As members become more knowledgeable about a topic, their needs change. Continually reassess members' needs.
- Continual reassessment of needs requires flexibility in program design. If emerging needs are identified during the program, try to adapt programming to meet these needs.
- There must be a visible relationship between the needs assessment and the program delivery. Conducting a needs assessment leads people to expect that programs will be developed to meet those needs.
- Members' own perceptions about their needs must be viewed as important. Participants should be involved in planning the needs assessment, prioritizing needs, and program decision-making.
- Needs assessment information should be gathered from more than one source, using different data collection techniques. This results in a more comprehensive identification of needs than can be accomplished by using a single source of data or a single technique.
- Valid and reliable data collection techniques must be used. Members will be more willing to accept the results of the needs assessment if they perceive that the assessment strategies used are valid and reliable.
- Needs assessment techniques should be used that identify individual as well as group needs. The needs of the minority should be gathered so that programs can be planned for those with needs different from the majority. This will enable the unit to meet a wider variety of members' needs.
- Information gathered about program needs should be disseminated to those people who participated in the needs assessment and to members who may have an interest in it. This helps to establish credibility for the resulting programs.

Items to include in a needs assessment instrument include:

- Demographic information—position, level, setting, years of experience, etc.
- Areas of immediate concern/need
- Suggested topics for unit programming
- Alternative program formats (e.g., dinners, after school, online)
- Suggested speakers/experts
- Best meeting locations
- Days and times best for participation
- Other organizations to include when programming
- Willingness to help with programming
- General comments

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.03 EVALUATING UNIT ACTIVITIES

Since each activity that your unit sponsors should be designed to meet a need or to reach a goal, an evaluation of the activities effectiveness should be conducted. Evaluations provide you with information to assist in planning future activities and keep you abreast of your members' needs and interests. Taking a head count is only a small part of the evaluation. Analyze the program for its strengths and weaknesses and determine those areas which could be improved.

When assessing an activity's value, consider the following points:

- Attendance: How does this figure compare with what was expected? If it is higher or lower, what factors contributed to this—scheduling, location, promotion, etc.?
- Participation: What was the level of involvement of the people who were there? What were the reactions of the speakers, guests, members, etc.?
- Interest: Was there feedback after the activity? Did people want more information? Was the topic appropriate?
- Effectiveness: Was the activity worth attending? Did it meet the needs for which it was designed? Was the effort invested in the activity worthwhile?

In addition to your assessment of the activity with regard to the unit's goals, participants should be invited to evaluate the activity. Again, this will provide you with information for improvement and for determining your members' needs.

An evaluation should ask for a variety of information. Items to consider include:

- Information about the participants
 - Participant's name and address
 - Whether participant is a CEC member (if not, follow-up with an invitation to join)
 - Whether participant has attended previous unit activities
 - How participant heard or learned about the activity
- Information about the speaker and/or activity
 - Effectiveness of presentation formats
 - Appropriateness of content level
 - Relevancy of content
 - Effective use of time
 - Responsiveness to participants' questions
- General information about the activity; these could be open-ended questions.
 - Strengths of the activity
 - Whether such a topic/activity/speaker should be sponsored/covered again
 - Whether additional information is needed
 - Other topics that could be addressed in future activities

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.04 UNIT ACTIVITIES “SAMPLER”

CEC is a network of members working together for a common purpose—better outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities. Sponsoring successful chapter activities is one of the most effective ways to recruit and retain members. If you provide activities that fulfill a need, people will get involved and participate.

Activities that units have found successful include:

- Community Projects
 - Sponsor a "games day" where a local athletic team participates in a training program or plays games with exceptional individuals.
 - Assist with or sponsor a Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop for exceptional individuals. Or, encourage established troops to recruit exceptional individuals.
 - Visit a facility for children with exceptionalities and play games, paint the children's faces, etc.
 - Hold a scavenger hunt. Pair a special child with a buddy to work as partners.
 - Set up a babysitting service or respite care program for families who have special needs children.
 - Conduct/sponsor a parent training activity.
 - Sponsor a Club for Careers in Special Education.
 - Sponsor Teacher Mini-Grants.
 - Sponsor an exhibit of exceptional children's art that "travels" around the community to schools, libraries, etc.
 - Contact the program director at the local radio station(s) about doing a series of programs on the education of children and youth with disabilities and/or are gifted. Different members can be responsible for each short presentation.
 - Hold an Exceptional Children's Week or Awareness Day.

- Workshops and "How-To's"
 - Ideas Swap Workshop. Each person comes with a pre-determined number of teaching ideas to share among members. Everyone goes home with something!
 - Training workshop on working with individuals with disabilities (do this for students who would like to work with Special Olympics, as babysitters, etc.).
 - Invite winners of mini-grants to present how they used the grant money.
 - Make-It-Take-It Workshop. Provide materials and participants make materials to use in their classrooms.
 - Teachers Show and Tell. Teachers are asked to demonstrate/share one particularly good activity with the rest of the group.
 - Invite specialists from throughout the area to present workshops on art, music, creative drama, communication, evaluation, etc.

- Discussions, Panels, Speakers
 - Find out what would interest your members. Some suggestions:
 - Resume Writing and Job Interviewing
 - First Year Teacher Topics
 - Teacher Gimmicks and Games
 - Legislative Update
 - Teacher Certification Issues
 - Inclusion
 - Learning Disabilities (or any disability)
 - Students Who Are At-Risk
 - Translating Research into Practice
 - Motivation
 - Stress Management
 - Utilize community resources such as health services personnel, educators (both regular and special), parents, professionals, politicians, superintendents, directors, etc.
 - Have a panel of parents discuss their concerns and issues.
 - Invite representatives from educational materials companies to demonstrate their products

- Speakers' Bureau

Develop a list of members and others who are interested in and capable of speaking to groups upon request. A speakers' bureau should be coordinated by someone who can take the time to keep a detailed file of information up-to-date. The file may include names, areas of expertise, topics previously presented and verified by at least two people (in writing) to be professionally valuable, new topics that could be addressed but would not carry written recommendations, addresses, phone numbers, and file origination dates.

Units sponsoring a speakers' bureau should also take care to provide a disclaimer regarding their recommendation of specific speakers. The listing of speakers should not carry unit endorsement of the speakers' content or capability.

- Other Ideas

- Take general education students through disability simulations.
- Arrange a tour(s) of community agencies who offer/provide services to individuals with disabilities so members can be aware of their services. Members can share what's learned with their colleagues and the parents of their students.
- Invite teachers to submit their good ideas and techniques. Review the entries and then develop a booklet to distribute to all members and contributors.
- Contact the local director of special education and offer to assist in the orientation of new teachers. In this way, members can provide new teachers with knowledge and information about the special education services and needs of exceptional students.
- Work with the local director of special education to arrange for community officials to be taken on a tour of the special education programs.

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.05 UNIT ACTIVITIES FOCUSING ON SOCIO-CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AMONG EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS

CEC recognizes the special and unique needs of members of diverse socio-cultural and linguistic groups, and encourages all units to engage in activities that will promote full and equitable participation and membership in society for all individuals. CEC has adopted a broad view of diversity that incorporates a wide range of characteristics. This includes (but is not limited to) ethnicity, race, language and communication, social class, physical, psychological and cognitive abilities, gender, sexual orientation, age, religious and spiritual values, and geographic location. CEC further recognizes that all individuals—students, families, as well as educators—are simultaneously members of multiple groups which influences their identity and shapes their world view.

The goals of these activities are to identify some of the issues related to serving exceptional children and youth in a multicultural society as well as issues experienced by educators from diverse socio-cultural groups, and to give members ideas on how they might learn more and become involved in some of these areas. As a result of engaging in meaningful dialogue and activities related to issues of diversity, equity, and social justice we hope that CEC membership will be positioned to assume a leadership role in enhancing the quality of life for all individuals with exceptionalities.

Cultural Diversity

Educators need to be aware of the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity within our society and the need to effectively serve exceptional students and their families who have historically been underserved or inappropriately served by educational and related service agencies. Educators must also be qualified to provide culturally and linguistically responsive services to exceptional learners and their families.

Suggested unit activities include:

- Learn about how the social fabric of the country is changing.
- Examine the cultural make-up of your state/province and local community.
- Find out how this is affecting the state/province and local school systems and their future planning.
- Identify the range of values, assumptions, beliefs and perceptions that are reflected in the local community, as well as those which characterize the organizational culture of schools and related service agencies.

Valuing Diversity

CEC recognizes the need to understand that ethnic, racial, linguistic and other cultural differences have the potential to enhance our social, peer and professional relationships. Schools should strive to provide enriching learning experiences to all children by linking the students' home experiences to those at school, and should ensure that learners who are members of non-dominant cultural groups have equitable opportunities to experience successful educational outcomes. Similarly, related agencies should ensure meaningful access to services for underserved populations, and deliver services in ways that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Suggested unit activities include:

- Provide professional development opportunities for educators to examine their own personal beliefs, values and assumptions about diversity, and to foster a view of diversity as a resource and strength.
- Promote educators' understanding of the influence of culture on teaching and learning, and support their use of differentiated instructional practices that are inclusive of the learning styles, abilities, and needs of all groups.
- Identify and learn about the contributions of different groups to the growth and development of the community, country, state/province, etc.
- Discuss successful activities for bridging home and school experiences.
- Create opportunities for family and community members to share their cultural heritage and resources as part of the educational experience for all students, in ways that integrate experiences into the curriculum.
- Review your school's curriculum to determine the inclusiveness of the materials used.
- Promote the acquisition, use and maintenance of languages and methods of communication other than English.
- Make sure that parents, family and community members feel welcomed when visiting their children's school, by providing information and materials in the language(s) and methods of communication of the home and/or parent, and by providing interpreters.

Culturally Diverse Educators and Educators with Disabilities

In spite of increasing diversity among the general population and particularly among school-age children and youth, educators as a group continue to be predominantly white, middle class, and female. CEC recognizes the importance of increasing representation of under-represented groups among teachers, related service providers, paraprofessionals as well as educational leaders.

Suggested unit activities include:

- Visit local high schools and present on the reward of teaching exceptional students.
- Establish a Club for Careers in Special Education and encourage members to enter the teaching profession.
- Participate in job fairs and career days to encourage students to enter careers in special education.
- Provide incentives for members of under-represented groups (e.g., bilingual paraprofessionals) to complete certification requirements.

Parental/Family Involvement

CEC acknowledges that parents and family members from non-dominant groups have often been excluded from full participation in their children's education including the special education process. CEC also recognizes that families from these groups may participate in the educational process in ways that differ from traditional views of parent involvement. Effective strategies must be used so parents are viewed as and feel like full partners in the education of their children.

Suggested unit activities include:

- Invite parents to meetings and ask for their input on various issues.
- Sponsor presentations on how to reach out to families in a multicultural society. Focus on different cultural groups in terms of family structure, child raising practices, social norms and institutions, place of individual in society, perception of disability, etc.
- Become familiar with the "stages of acceptance" experienced by parents.
- Review materials sent to parents to determine if they are written in an appropriate manner and level for different cultural groups. If not, revise the materials, possibly in a language other than English.

Identification of Ethnically, Culturally, and Linguistically Diverse Children

Disproportionate representation in special and gifted education among African American, Hispanic, American Indian and Asian children and youth continues to be of serious concern to CEC and to the profession. This warrants specific actions to prevent continued underachievement among these groups.

Suggested unit activities include:

- Examine the curriculum and instructional practices of the school to identify areas in which some groups of students may be underachieving when compared to others.
- Systematically investigate potential factors which may be creating inequitable learning opportunities for underachieving students.
- Learn about prereferral strategies for identifying disabilities among students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Provide professional development activities that are ongoing and sustained over time, to support educators in implementing effective strategies to prevent underachievement, and to provide early interventions to struggling learners.
- Increase awareness among educators of factors which may lead to under-identification of students with disabilities in gifted education as well as specific categories of special education.
- Explore ways special education programs can integrate services with other programs to appropriately identify and serve culturally diverse students who are being served through bilingual education, migrant education, Indian education, or Head Start programs.

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.06 RECOGNIZING SPECIAL PEOPLE THROUGH AWARDS

People like to know that their efforts and contributions are appreciated. In addition, individuals who receive recognition for their actions are more likely to stay involved and/or committed to individuals with exceptionalities.

Recognition can be given through presentation of an award, by honoring an individual, by publishing someone's accomplishment in a newsletter, or by thanking someone publicly for a job well done.

Award programs offered by units can include a variety of features. Awards can require nominations that indicate an individual has met certain criteria, an individual can be honored for a recent accomplishment, or a unit's executive committee can choose to honor members who have been active.

Programs to recognize members of the unit "who keep it going" can include awards for:

- Coordinating or chairing a project or committee
- One or more outstanding volunteer(s) who always seem to be willing to get involved
- Recruiting the most new members
- The past president
- Outstanding Service Award

Programs to recognize individuals who support exceptional individuals can include awards for:

- Outstanding Teacher
- Outstanding Administrator
- Outstanding Rookie Teacher
- Public officials
- Individuals who provide related services
- Individuals who perform routine activities with exceptional individuals (i.e., one chapter recognized the individuals who drove the buses)

Some units also sponsor award programs that feature:

- Outstanding University Student
- Scholarships
- Mini-grants for individuals working in the field of special education who need additional funds to sponsor a program

Once awards or honors are given, it is important to follow up on the announcement by placing articles about the individuals recognized in the unit newsletter. In addition, distributing press releases to local newspapers, schools, agencies, the winners employer, the state/provincial unit, etc., highlights the individual and provides public relations for your unit.

Informal ways to recognize the contributions of members can include:

- Nominate for appropriate CEC awards.
- Put a "survival kit" together and present to particularly harried members to perk them up.
- Send anonymous, humorous cards or e-mail messages during hectic times.
- Select a member of the week, month, or year.
- Recognize contributions of members in your unit's newsletter.
- Treat deserving members as "guests of honor" at a meeting or banquet. Give awards to active members for their contributions to unit activities. It's always fun to give humorous awards, too, i.e., for the member who fell more times than the kids while skating, for an "exceptionally" talented person in the talent show, etc.
- How about a "Thank You" party? Cook out? Pizza party? Any excuse for a party will do!
- If funds allow, give a CEC membership to the most active member.
- Say "thank you" or write thank you notes.

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.07 EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN'S WEEK

CEC initiated Exceptional Children's Week (ECW) as a means to educate the public about children with disabilities and garner support for them and special education. Many CEC units have taken advantage of ECW to awaken an understanding of the needs and capabilities of exceptional children and the programs that support them in their communities and states or provinces. ECW brings together professionals, parents, students, politicians, and the general public, working collectively to enhance understanding and acceptance of individuals with exceptionalities. ECW provides a golden opportunity to spread the word about special education, our successes, and the accomplishments of children with exceptionalities.

The goals for Exceptional Children's Week include:

- To promote an awareness of and interaction with children and youth with exceptionalities.
- To promote community knowledge, understanding, and interest in children and youth with exceptionalities.
- To inform people of the potential of children and youth with exceptionalities.
- To inform people of the services available for children and youth with exceptionalities.
- To support and help expand existing programs for children and youth with exceptionalities.
- To develop interest in and support of legislation and funding by both the public and legislators.
- To promote awareness of existing legislation for children and youth with exceptionalities.
- To inform the public about career opportunities for children and youth with exceptionalities.
- To inform potential employers of the abilities and value of individuals with exceptionalities as employees.
- To inform the public regarding how they can actively support individuals with exceptionalities.

CEC celebrates Exceptional Children's Week annually during the second week of May. Many CEC units celebrate ECW during this time, but units may choose to celebrate ECW at anytime during the year.

Suggested activities for ECW:

- To Promote Community Awareness
 - Ask the governor of your state or province to issue a proclamation about ECW. Send copies to the mayors of the cities and request a city-wide proclamation.
 - Invite other organizations that focus on individuals with disabilities such as United Cerebral Palsy, Association for Retarded Citizens, etc. to participate in your activities.
 - Invite local politicians, business representatives, school board members, superintendents, etc. to a classroom to share in activities with special education students.
 - Recruit and organize volunteers to assist with Special Olympics or Very Special Arts programs.
 - Sponsor an art exhibit featuring the works of exceptional individuals. The exhibit could be at a mall, school, library, or administrative office; or it could rotate among sites.
 - Present awards to local individuals who have done something special to help exceptional persons, such as an outstanding general educator, outstanding employer of persons with disabilities, outstanding principal, etc.
 - Arrange guest appearances for CEC members on radio or local TV talk shows.
 - Have CEC members guest speak at local associations and organizations.

- Initiate an awareness day in your school. Use blindfolds to simulate visual impairments, teach a class how to sign and have your class communicate without talking, use mirror writing to demonstrate what it's like not to be able to do something easily or to simulate dyslexia, ask students to do their work with one arm in a sling or with their non-dominant hand, have students spend the day in a wheelchair. These activities can also be used in other group activities.
 - Place newspaper ads, activity notices, articles, or feature stories
 - Provide TV and radio announcements recognizing special education programs in the community
- To Provide Direct Service to Individuals with Disabilities
 - Balloon release: have each student place his or her name and address inside a balloon with a message
 - Poster contest
 - Arts and crafts displays
 - Talent shows
 - Field days such as with Special Olympics
 - Carnivals or fun fairs
 - Special events - arrange a private time for special education children to swim, roller skate, ice skate, bowl, etc.
 - Awards to outstanding exceptional children or adults in your community

CEC has developed an Exceptional Children's Week handbook to assist units in organizing their programs and activities to advance the education of students with disabilities, both during ECW and throughout the year. Contact CEC's Constituent Services Center toll free at 888/232-7733 or e-mail service@cec.sped.org to request a copy.

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.08 THE CEC CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACTION NETWORK (CAN) AND FACILITATING STATE* AND DIVISION POLITICAL ACTIVITY

What is the Purpose of CAN?

The purpose of the Children and Youth Action Network (CAN) is to (1) to effect the necessary governmental changes at the local, state and federal levels which will make possible the implementation of CEC policies relating to the education of exceptional children; and (2) to further vitalize CEC units by providing meaningful vehicles for membership involvement and CEC public visibility.

What is the Structure of the Network?

CAN is a communication network composed of a cadre of individuals capable and willing to effect necessary governmental change. CAN coordinators selected by their respective state unit or division make up the network. Each state's CAN coordinator is responsible for developing and maintaining a system of regional coordinators within his/her state. Regional coordinators may also develop a system of local coordinators.

How Are CAN Coordinators Chosen?

Children and Youth Action Network (CAN) coordinators are selected by their respective state unit or division. The position of CAN coordinator is an extremely sensitive and visible post and the selection of the coordinator should be approached with great care. Some of the factors to be considered in appointing a coordinator include:

- Commitment to the policies of CEC.
- Willingness to devote the necessary time to carry out all responsibilities of this position.
- Freedom to speak for and represent CEC to policy makers and the public.
- Access to telephone, mail, duplication, and other communication devices.
- A willingness to serve a minimum of two years in this capacity.

State units and divisions are also encouraged to have an alternate CAN contact so that there will be no disruption in communication between CEC's Department of Policy and Advocacy Services and the unit.

What Are Some of the Responsibilities of CAN Coordinators?

- Each CAN coordinator is responsible for developing a system of regional coordinators within his/her state. The number and location of these coordinators will be dependent upon the demographic, economic, and social factors of the state as well as CEC organizational considerations.
- Develop and operate an effective Action Network in each state and whenever necessary trigger the network to achieve political action objectives at all levels of government.

*Please note: While the purpose of the CEC CAN may be the same, the operation of the network in the U.S. and Canada differs. This Fact Sheet is specific to U.S. CAN coordinators.

- Provide information to CEC on significant activities within the state/division interest area that may require assistance from CEC, constitute significant policy advances or retreats, or be of interest to other units.
- Advise CEC of any issue or crisis that may have national implications.
- Provide CEC with significant public statements and media articles.
- Report to CEC contacts with federal officials (i.e., members of the U.S. Congress and Executive Branch officials) on significant policy issues.
- Inform CEC of the state unit's public policy priorities.
- Inform CEC of invitations extended to members of the federal legislative or executive branches of government to participate in state unit meetings or activities.

How Long Should a CAN Coordinator Serve?

It is recommended that CAN coordinators serve at least two years; however, coordinators are encouraged to commit themselves for longer periods if at all possible.

What Are Some of the Responsibilities of CEC's Department of Policy and Advocacy Services?

- Provide CAN with relevant information from federal and state levels of government.
- Apprise CAN of all major relevant actions by the federal government.
- Alert the network or any segment of CAN to situations requiring political action.
- Maintain regular communication to all coordinators.
- Make training available to CAN coordinators.
- Give priority to the network in terms of problem solving and assistance with network activities.
- Provide technical assistance at the request of a CAN coordinator.
- Coordinate with CAN coordinators requests from other groups for CEC's participation in government related activities in their state.
- Monitor and improve the operation of the network.

How Can the President Support Political Activity in Their State/Division?

In order to sustain a strong ongoing public policy program, it is important that this activity be a part of the state/division program plan. Many units have also found it extremely helpful to adopt a public policy platform setting forth the issues to be pursued over a one or two year period.

In striving to accomplish the objectives of the policy platform, it is equally important to have an annual budget to support activities such as postage, telephone, duplication, travel, training, and fees associated with membership in coalitions/consortiums.

Other activities that can heighten the visibility of the work the unit is doing in the area of special education policy include: print news articles on CAN activities and policy accomplishments in unit publications; conduct sessions and/or presentations on special education policy, political action, etc. at unit conferences.

Who Should Be Notified when a CAN Coordinator Change is Made?

CEC's Department of Policy and Advocacy Services should be notified of the change, preferably, prior to its effective date. If this is not possible, then notification should occur as soon as possible after the change has taken place. *CEC will not change the name of the coordinator until written instruction to do so is received from the state/division president.*

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.09 PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Central to any profession is its will to abide by a set of ethical principles and standards. As professionals serving individuals with exceptionalities, special educators possess a special trust granted by the community. As such, special educators have a responsibility to be guided by their professional principles and practice standards.

The *CEC Code of Ethics* is eight fundamental ethical premises to which all special educators are bound. The *CEC Standards for Professional Practice* describes the principles special educators use to guide their day-to-day responsibilities. The Ethics and Professional Practice Standards together are tools for special educators to measure themselves and in turn to measure each other's professional excellence. It is incumbent on all special educators to use these standards in all aspects of their professional practice.

In addition, CEC develops the standards for the preparation and licensure of special education personnel. CEC uses these standards to evaluate special education professional preparation programs seeking national recognition. These standards are also used as models for state teacher licensure frameworks. The appropriate governing bodies in the Canadian provinces should also use these standards to examine current special education personnel preparation practices and to propose future directions for the profession in Canada.

A continuing responsibility of each CEC unit is support of the use of CEC's Ethics and Professional Practice Standards. Units can provide this support by:

- Disseminating copies of the Code of Ethics, Standards for Professional Practice, and the Standards for the Preparation of Special Education Personnel to CEC members.
- Discussing the CEC Code of Ethics, Standards for Professional Practice, and the Standards for the Preparation of Special Education Personnel at meetings and conferences.
- Sharing copies of the Code of Ethics, Standards for Professional Practice, and the Standards for the Preparation of Special Education Personnel with new special education teachers.
- Assuring that students training in special education at area universities and colleges are aware of the standards.
- Meeting with building and district school administrators to compare district practices with the professional standards.
- Establishing a process within which special educators can include professional growth goals related to the professional standards.
- Periodically drawing attention to the standards in newsletters, on websites, and other venues.

CEC standards are contained in What Every Special Educator Must Know: The Standards for the Preparation and Certification of Special Educators. This publication is available to CEC members on the CEC Web site and for purchase through CEC's Constituent Services Center at 888/232-7733, at the Web site, or through the CEC catalog.

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.10 FUNDRAISING

There are four primary sources of funds available to your unit. They are: refunds,* grants, fundraising projects, and donations or endowments. Which way is best for you? Only you, your executive board, and your general membership can answer that question, but before you tackle it, first answer these questions:

- What will we do with the money raised?
- How much money do we need?

Once you have a good idea of where the unit is going and what it is planning to do in the forthcoming year, you'll have a good idea of what it will cost.

Guidelines for fundraising include:

- Make the purpose for fundraising meaningful to members and others...explain why you are raising funds and publicize your efforts to the public.
- Directly relate the use of the funds raised to children with exceptionalities, if possible.
- Be sure you have support for the project, not only verbally but with an active group of volunteers.
- Do extensive preplanning to take care of the unexpected.
- Move slowly, especially if this is your unit's first try at something like this. Try a few smaller fundraising events before a large one.
- Plan for fundraising events just as your unit plans annual professional programs—not too many and well-spaced.
- Know what other groups are using as fundraising activities and try not to compete.
- Be creative. The public has seen a lot of fundraisers and you want to catch their attention as well as their support.
- Carefully spend money to make money. Advertising your fundraiser could double or triple your results.
- Contact service organizations in your community. Clubs such as the Junior League, Elks, Rotary, Civitans, Lions and Jaycees are willing to sponsor or conduct an activity and donate the money to a worthy cause (CEC). Other times these organizations are looking for worthwhile activities to support. Convince them that your CEC unit is worthwhile.
- Contact commercial businesses and industrial firms in your community. Donations of money or materials to a worthy organization is good public relations. When these donations are made, be sure that the business gets the good public relations and publicity it's expecting.
- Think big. One activity that makes \$1,000 is easier to manage than 10 bake sales.
- Remember: Fundraising can be successful when it's quick and easy.
- Use your fundraising activities as public awareness activities. Make sure all publicity for your events and everything you sell has "CEC" on it. Make sure everyone who makes a purchase or a donation knows what the Council for Exceptional Children is and what it stands by including a summary sheet of your unit's activities.

*The rebate check for all members in the state/province is mailed directly to the state/provincial unit. Distribution of refund monies to chapters is determined by the state/provincial unit. Divisions and subdivisions do not receive refunds from CEC Headquarters.

Special Events

Special events are an excellent way to make money,* advertise an organization, and attract new members while providing fun for everyone. Here are some ideas:

- Publications: cookbooks, how-to books, resource directories
- Sales: garage sale, flea market, bake sale, arts and crafts show, book sale
- Auctions: goods, services
- Shows: fashion show, talent show, antique show, car show
- Services: catering, car wash, odd jobs, recycle cans, parents-night-out (childcare)
- Marathons: walk-a-thon, swim-a-thon, bike-a-thon, rocking chair-a-thon
- Sports Events: games, tournaments, lessons
- Eating Events: pancake breakfast, spaghetti supper, box lunches, potluck dinner
- Social Events: dance, concert, casino night
- Professional Development Activities: seminars, workshops, conferences

Other fundraising activities to keep in mind:

- Sell coffee, popcorn, tea, fruit, baked goods, pizza, nachos, etc.
- Sell tote bags, holiday items, plants, jewelry, T-shirts, visors, etc.
- Sell buttons. Make your own! Easy to assemble, and cheap too!
- Sell carnations or roses for Valentine's Day or Mother's Day.
- Sponsor a member get-together to make creative crafts to sell.
- Hold any type of drawing or raffle.
- Sponsor public interest activities such as a race, bingo, Las Vegas night, carnival, etc.
- Sponsor a night at your local playhouse or theater. Contact the playhouse or theater for special package group rates. Purchase tickets and resell them for a profit.
- Have a combined fundraiser with another nearby CEC unit, if possible.
- Sponsor a midnight bowling tournament.
- Sponsor a basketball game against a local radio station.
- Work with a local miniature golf course to sponsor a miniature golf tournament.
- Hold a celebrity lock-up. Individuals from your school or other local officials or celebrities are jailed and must make "bail" to be released. Or, have individuals pay to have someone "arrested."
- Copy "public domain" computer software programs to sell. (This is a good idea for an activity to conduct at conferences where there are plenty of computers to use.)
- Have a photo contest. All entries pay a nominal fee to be entered, and offer ribbons or small prizes for the "winning" entries in various categories (most artistic, cutest children, funniest pets, best photo of local landmark, most colorful, etc.). Have a group of three or four persons to judge the photos.
- Sell cookbooks of your members' best recipes (and illustrated by children!).
- Produce a desk or wall calendar with quotes about and/or pictures of children. Include school holidays, workdays, etc.
- Produce a handbook of ideas and activities for teachers.
- Sell greeting cards or stationery featuring children's art. Sponsor a contest for children's art and use the winning entries into cards or stationery. Be sure to award all the children who participated with a "thank you" certificate for their entry.

*Be sure any necessary permits have been obtained before the event.

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.11 NEWSLETTER DEVELOPMENT

One of the most important activities in any CEC unit is its newsletter. The newsletter is one of the best ways a unit can communicate with all members on a consistent and timely basis. The key is positive communication conveying opportunities for member information and involvement.

Guidelines for developing a newsletter include:

- Determine newsletter format and make a dummy
- Collect all information submitted for inclusion in the newsletter
- Acknowledge the receipt of materials and communicate decisions about publication to contributors of materials
- Monitor other publications for information to be included in the newsletter
- Develop and disseminate advertising guidelines (if accepted) including types of advertising accepted, ad rates, ad sizes, and deadlines
- Edit/rewrite and prepare copy
- Type and carefully proofread copy
- Obtain approval of copy from designated officers prior to printing
- Arrange printing
- Obtain mailing list
- Arrange mailing or distribution of the newsletter
- Explore and keep up-to-date on current postal rates and regulations
- Place copies of the newsletter in the unit's file

Suggested components of a newsletter:

- Lead article
- President's column
- CEC news from all levels (community, state/provincial, division, subdivision, and international)
- Political action report (Children and Youth Action Network)
- Special sections written by, for, or about teachers, students, administrators, paraprofessionals, parents, and/or related service providers
- How-to information, practical techniques
- Officer and committee reports
- Member news (new members, happy and sad occasions)
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of officers
- Name, address, and phone number of the Newsletter Editor, and newsletter deadlines (for at least the next issue)
- Calendar of events
- Advertisements
- Responses from readers and fun features

Guidelines for organizing your newsletter include:

- Front page:
 - Use a large masthead—that immediately tells the audience who you are
 - Use an attention-getting active headline
 - Use one or two photographs—a picture is worth a thousand words!
 - Don't put the President's column on the front page. Reserve your front page for an article headline that will engage your reader.
 - Provide a tickler about what's inside or a table of contents.
- Second page:
 - Viewpoint from President, or President's column written as a real article—use an exciting headline.
 - Table of contents
- Centerfold:
 - Large article where headline/graphic can stretch across both pages; or series of smaller but related articles.
- Back page:
 - Calendar or organization information.
 - Mailing information.

Formatting your newsletter:

By following these suggestions, you will save time and increase the level of readability of your newsletter.

- 3-column format with .25" gutters between columns and .50" left/right and top/bottom margins gives you the greatest flexibility.
- Use no more than two font styles, choosing one for subheads and the other for body copy. Body copy should have one font size assigned, i.e., use 12 point Times Roman throughout your newsletter's body text.
- Break copy with headlines, subheads, bullets, pull quotes, photos.
- Photographs should reflect action. Stay away from static shots and empty chairs! Show happy people working with their students, involved in activity, etc.
- Use headlines to grab attention.

Keep Your Newsletter Lively!

- Write for your audience. Find out what they want to read about. Concentrate on what's in it for the reader. Keep your audience's interests in mind for every story: how will this information help them perform their job, affect their career, etc. Why is this important to them?
- Help members feel proud to belong to CEC and your unit. Include positive (and where possible, personal) stories about events and projects that help teachers or students.
- Make your lead story one that will attract most members of your audience. Include a photo(s) if possible. Always write a caption explaining who's who or what's going on.
- Put members' names in bold type.
- Include quotes in your stories. They make the information more personal and inviting.
- When reporting on an upcoming event, such as a conference, make it sound important to your members to attend, and fun and inviting. Highlight prominent speakers and major points of their presentations.

TO THE POINT

Council for Exceptional Children • 2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000 • Arlington, VA 22202-3557

- When writing a story, put the most important information first.
- Use action verbs. Banish “be” verbs.
- Write in active voice.

Tips for editors—evaluating your newsletter:

We are exposed to thousands of pieces of information each day. How do you make your newsletter “stand out in the crowd?” A critical evaluation of your newsletter will help you realize what improvements should be made to make your newsletter “reader friendly.” Here’s a few tips:

- Be sure that you have a mix of articles that will give all segments of your readership a chance to find subjects of interest.
- Is the writing clear and concise with short sentences, short paragraphs and short words? Have you used active words, concrete nouns, lots of quotes, good rhythm (long, short and medium-length sentences)?
- Do you have jargon and “buzz” words or acronyms that might confuse a reader?
- Are your stories/articles organized so the reader has an easy time following them?
- Do your articles contain any “holes”—missing items a reader might want to know about?
- Have you selected a consistent format in both layout and typography (type face) and stuck with it throughout the newsletter? Failure to do this will give your newsletter a multiple personality that will confuse readers as they turn the page.
- Does your layout have a clean, contemporary look with items easy to locate?
- Have you used a legible typeface? Is it easy to read?
- Check the spelling of all names against a directory or other source that you know is correct.
- Dial any telephone numbers listed before going to press. It’s a final check to make sure the number is correct and hasn’t been changes or disconnected.
- Check to ensure that “dated” material is not included—i.e., will your members receive the newsletter before the conference registration deadline, proposal deadline, or event? If not, either delete the item, or mail your newsletter earlier or upgrade your postage method (i.e., mail it first class rather than bulk rate) to ensure your members receive it in time.
- In addition to checking spelling and grammar by using your computer’s “Spell Check” and “Grammar Check” features, carefully proofread your newsletter.

3. UNIT ACTIVITIES

3.12 PUBLIC RELATIONS

The efforts and accomplishments of a unit of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) have far more impact when there is a well-developed public relations program. But public relations is not just publicity, a one-shot activity, or a one-person show. Public relations is:

- Communicating with members.
- Informing the public about your goals and activities.
- Sharing information and efforts with related organizations.
- Educating the media.
- Informing legislators and taxpayers.
- Maintaining an ongoing program.

Public relations activities should include publicity for unit programs, information about CEC, and general public information about persons who are exceptional.

Events to publicize include:

- Meeting announcements
- Awards and award presentations
- Special achievements of persons with exceptionalities
- Conferences and conventions
- Displays and exhibits
- Direct service activities
- Impact of new legislation
- Special events

Guidelines for working with the media include:

- Contact representatives of all community news media—newspapers, radio and television stations.
- Develop a media list including the individual names of people you talk with, their address, times you can contact them, deadlines, and other information relevant to their operations and interest.
- Invite your media contacts to unit activities. Introduce them to other members and be sure they leave the event with a greater appreciation for your unit's work.
- Educate media contacts about CEC, its purpose, and the role of your unit and find out what things most interest them.
- Send a note of thanks or call to express appreciation when you get good coverage. This is vital to maintain good working relations.

Radio and Television

Some radio and television stations are required to give free public service time to community organizations and activities. Contact the person in charge of public service announcements (PSA's) to get more details. Each station expects your group to follow their guidelines, and will give you a copy of their expectations for PSA's.

In addition to PSA's, the most common formats used to publicize your activities via radio and television stations include: live and taped interviews, editorials, panel discussions, community bulletin boards, news broadcasts, and call-in shows.

Newspapers

The print media expects you to provide the facts of the story—through a press release—and, if possible with photos. Try to hand deliver your material to the editor to make an impression, rather than having it received through the mail.

Guidelines for writing press releases include:

- Print the release on letterhead with your logo.
- Be accurate, brief and clear.
- Answer the questions who, what, when, where, and why.
- Stress the important element of your story. Mention names.
- Type and double space the release, use only one side of the paper.
- List your name, address, and daytime phone number at the top of each page.
- Note at the bottom of each page whether the release ends or continues.
- Note whether a photo is enclosed.
- Date the release and state the date and time the news is to be released.
- Don't send a release too early; it may get lost. Know the paper's deadlines and use them.

Snapping Winning Photos*

Imagine the newspaper featuring a photo of your unit in action. While competition for such exposure is tough, increase your chance of getting coverage by heeding experts' recommendations on how to take winning photos:

- **Be prepared.** Plan in advance what photos you want to take. Brainstorm ways to be creative and different.
- **Use black and white film.** Send glossy prints to the newspaper with a caption attached to the bottom of each photo. Identify individuals from left to right.
- **Aim for action.** Instead of taking a mug shot of a member who's won an award, take a photo showing him working on his winning project.
- **Eliminate distractions** such as water pitchers and ashtrays. Be on the lookout for plants, chandeliers, and exit signs that can ruin an otherwise good photo.
- **Avoid posed photos whenever possible.** If you need to take a group photo, have some people stand and others sit so that everyone's face will be visible. You may want a posed shot when a VIP visits. Show the VIP engaged in conversation with officers or participating in a workshop, for example.
- **Encourage your photo subjects to relax,** talk with one another, and make eye contact. Try to capture those fleeting but story-telling gestures and facial expressions.
- **Always take several photos.** It takes many tries to get the best possible shot.
- **Experiment with different angles.** Lie on the floor, stand on a chair, or kneel to get a variety of shots.
- **Make sure photos you submit to newspapers are in focus.** Most editors will reject blurry photos.

*Reprinted from Tomorrow's Business Leader, Future Business Leaders of America; Reston, VA; September, 1987.