

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.