



The voice and vision of special education

PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA FOR THE 112th CONGRESS 2011-2013

The Council for Exceptional Children is an international community of educators who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities and their families through professional excellence and advocacy.

CEC represents over 35,000 professionals who work on behalf of children with exceptionalities, is the national voice for special educators and children and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. CEC members serve on the frontline, educating children and youth today for integral participation in the workforce and society tomorrow.

As a national leader in special and gifted education policy, CEC – in close collaboration with its Children and Youth Action Network (CAN) – has created its Public Policy Agenda for the 112th United States Congress. At a time when numerous policy challenges and opportunities are confronting special and gifted education, CEC stands ready to collaborate with policymakers to craft solutions that will positively impact children and youth with exceptionalities and the professionals who work on their behalf.

CEC's advocacy prioritizes emerge from one essential conviction: every child deserves access to a challenging, motivating and rigorous education.

CEC's advocacy priorities emerge from one essential conviction: every child deserves access to a challenging, motivating, and rigorous education. A high quality education requires superior leadership, full financial support, effective instruction, skilled staff, appropriate programs, suitable facilities, and family and community involvement.

CEC is committed to ensuring that the voice of special education is heard in public policy forums in which decisions are made or influenced. While there are many areas of concern to CEC members, CEC's Public Policy Agenda represents priority issues and is not intended to be an exclusive list, but rather to serve as a blueprint for the Council's policy and advocacy work.

High Priority: Identified by CEC members as needing immediate federal legislative or regulatory attention.

Policy Objectives

- **Advocate for federal policies that recognize and support the unique role of special educators as integral to achieving positive academic, developmental, and functional outcomes for children and youth with disabilities** by strengthening the rigor of preparation, induction, and mentoring programs; improving working conditions; increasing job-embedded professional development; and other strategies that address the recruitment and retention of well-prepared, special educators through the reauthorization and implementation of laws such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- **Advocate for federal policies that will spur stronger collaboration and coordination between special and general education** through the reauthorization and implementation of laws such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- **Advocate for federal policies that fully fund special and general education, early intervention, and special/gifted education research and development programs**, through mandatory full funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B Grants to States Program; full funding of IDEA Part C Infants and Toddlers With Disabilities Program, IDEA Part B Section 619 Preschool Program, IDEA Part D Support Programs; full funding of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind; and substantial increases for research in special education and the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act.

- **Advocate for federal policies that ensure a free appropriate public education for children and youth with disabilities and comprehensive early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities** through the reauthorization, regulatory provisions and continued full implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and by addressing issues such as ensuring access to the general education curriculum; developing a well prepared, diverse special education workforce; reducing paperwork burden; least restrictive environment; identification and eligibility procedures; disproportionality; mental health; transition initiatives; family involvement; procedural safeguards; monitoring and enforcement; reexamining maintenance of effort requirements; and the release of the final IDEA Part C regulations.
- **Advocate for federal policies that result in the implementation of evidence-based, best practices for children and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents**, including school-wide initiatives such as Response to Intervention (RTI), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and policies that support and promote positive school climates.
- **Advocate for federal policies that support accountability and assessment systems that better address the needs of students with disabilities and/or gifts and talents** through assessment systems that are designed to address diverse learners using multiple indicators of student performance; and accountability systems that measure student growth over time through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind.
- **Advocate for federal policies that ensure the meaningful participation of children and youth with disabilities and the professionals who work on their behalf in school reform initiatives**, such as charter schools, differentiated compensation systems, and high school reform through the reauthorization and implementation of laws such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- **Advocate for federal policies that promote the expansion of research opportunities in special education and bridge the research-to-practice gap** through the reauthorization of the Education Sciences Reform Act and by addressing issues such as strengthening the National Center on Special Education Research and the process for establishing research priorities for the U.S. Department of Education.
- **Advocate for federal policies that address the unique educational needs of students with gifts and talents** by increasing the federal role to support states in building the capacity to equitably and appropriately identify and serve students with gifts and talents by advocating for provisions in relevant legislation and policies, including in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act /No Child Left Behind, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, appropriations legislation and other pertinent legislation.
- **Advocate for international policies that reaffirm the human rights of persons with disabilities** through ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the United States.

Priority: Identified by CEC members as needing increasing federal legislative or regulatory attention and will be acted on in concert with the legislative calendar.

Policy Objectives

- **Advocate for federal policies that improve transition systems between school and work for youth with disabilities** through the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act addressing issues such as enhancing community outreach and professional development, creating of and funding for research priorities designed to address individuals with disabilities and clarifying and restructuring WIA's performance measures to incentivize providers to work with individuals with disabilities.
- **Advocate for federal policies that supports career and technical education** through the reauthorization and implementation of the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

Monitor: Identified by CEC members as relevant but will be acted on only when specific opportunities arise or conditions change members' needs and priorities.

- **Advocate for other legislation/policy opportunities** as they arise through a variety of legislative vehicles.