



June 2014

Investing in Special & Gifted Education: Impacting 10 Million Children & Families

SUMMARY

- Over 6 million children ages birth through young adulthood, their families, schools and 400,000 special educators are directly impacted by the federal investment in special education through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which is funded at 15.8% of its authorized level. U.S. House Members are asked to co-sponsor CEC-endorsed, bi-partisan legislation, IDEA Full Funding Act (H.R 4136), to fully fund special education in 10 years.
- IDEA's early childhood programs serve over one million infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, a 45% increase over the last 20 years; but decades-long stagnant federal funding has meant 40% fewer federal dollars per child. In fact, funding per child has hit a 27-year low for preschoolers with disabilities.
- Funding for IDEA's six National Activities Programs has decreased recently, and is only 2% of the full federal special education budget. These programs provide critical infrastructure – preparing teachers, promoting technology, offering technical assistance to families and educators – that enables high-quality delivery of special education services.
- Over 3 million students are academically gifted throughout the country, though availability of services varies widely. The sole federal program supporting gifted education, the *Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act*, is funded at \$5 million, far too low to meet students' needs, instead a \$20 million investment is needed.

In 1975, President Ford signed into law what we now know as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), pioneering legislation that mandates a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. Prior to IDEA's passage, children with disabilities were shunned from school, plagued by stereotypes, misconceptions and low expectations. As a civil rights law, over the last 40 years, IDEA has revolutionized the lives of children with disabilities and now serves over 6 million children from birth through young adulthood in every state throughout the country.



Support education funding legislation that matches the needs of children with disabilities and/or gifts and talents, their families and the educators who work on their behalf.

ADDRESSING NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

CEC urges Congress to provide \$1.02 billion in IDEA's Early Intervention Program (Part C) and \$1.12 billion in IDEA's Preschool Program (Part B-Sec. 619)

IDEA's early childhood programs serve over 1 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families through Part C and Part B Section 619, respectively. Over the last twenty years, both programs have increased the children served by approximately 50%. Despite this growth and positive outcomes for children, federal funding has failed to keep pace. In fact, the federal cost per child has decreased by 40% in this time.

As a result, states are implementing cost-savings measures such as narrowing the eligibility criteria for infants/toddlers to qualify for Part C – early intervention services and shifting costs to families. At a time when we have nationally recognized the importance of investing early to support improved developmental and academic outcomes, CEC urges Congress to provide \$1.02 billion in IDEA's Early Intervention Program (Part C) and \$1.12 billion in IDEA's Preschool Program (Part B-Sec. 619).

PROVIDING INDIVIDUALIZED SPECIAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Co-Sponsor IDEA Full Funding Act (H.R. 4136) to fulfill Congress's 40-year promise to fully fund special education.

Over six million school-aged students, in 98% of our nation's schools, benefit from individualized special education and related services provided by IDEA. These services – which may be provided by special and general education teachers, specialized instructional support personnel – are tailored to meet the specific needs of each child. Students with disabilities are approximately 13% of the total student enrollment.

Nearly 40 years ago, when IDEA was originally passed, the Federal government pledged to pay 40% of the "excess cost" of educating a student with a disability, what is referred to as *full funding*. Unfortunately, in FY 2014, the Federal share was only 15.8%, leaving states and school districts to pay the balance. CEC supports the bi-partisan IDEA Full Funding Act (H.R. 4136) introduced by Reps. Van Hollen (D-MD), Huffman (D-CA), McKinley (R-WV), Walz (D-MN), Gibson (R-NY), and Reichert (R-WA). U.S. House Members are asked to co-sponsor H.R. 4136

ENSURING HIGH-QUALITY SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Increase investments in all IDEA Part D programs and the National Center for Special Education Research to better equip educators and families to address the needs of children and youth with disabilities.

Together, IDEA's National Activities Program (Part D) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) within the Institute of Education Sciences, provide the infrastructure to enable high-quality special education services for children and youth with disabilities. Part D focuses on preparing personnel, disseminating information, providing resources to families, and utilizing technology. NCSER is the primary driver of special education research in the nation, and provides evidence-based practices for classroom teachers.

Unfortunately, funding for IDEA Part D and NCSER remains devastatingly low. In fact, in 2011, 30% of NCSER's budget was cut, resulting in a near stoppage of special education research in 2014. Therefore, CEC urges Congress to substantially invest in both programs to ensure that families and educators have the necessary tools to support children and youth with disabilities.

GIFTED LEARNERS LARGELY IGNORED IN FEDERAL EDUCATION POLICY

As the sole federal initiative supporting students with gifts and talents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, Congress should invest \$20 million in the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act.

There is a growing educational crisis playing out in every state across the nation that receives little attention among policymakers in Washington, DC: a significant "excellence gap" exists at the top achievement levels between minority and white students and between low-income students and their more advantaged peers. The Javits Act seeks to remedy this by supporting research and development to better identify and serve high-ability students from underserved backgrounds.

In 2014, the Javits program was funded at \$5 million, following three years of receiving no funding. However, a \$20 million investment is needed for the Javits program to reach its potential. In addition, CEC-endorsed, bi-partisan legislation the TALENT Act (S. 512/H.R. 2338) would make comprehensive changes to the PK-12 education system to better address students who are gifted.