

Championing Special Educators: Strategies for Recruitment & Retention in Educator Preparation

Session 5 – Championing Special Education Through Advocacy

Check-In Question: What are some challenges you've encountered in retaining special educators, and how might we address them through advocacy?

Introductions



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Resource Overview

- ✧ [Council on Exceptional Children \(CEC\)- Policy and Advocacy](#)
- ✧ [CEC Special Education Legislative Summit 2024](#)
- ✧ [Special Education Careers - OPTIMISE](#)
- ✧ [AASA School Superintendents Association](#)
- ✧ [Council of Administrators of Special Educators \(CASE\) Legislative Priorities](#)
- ✧ [Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates-Legislative Tracker Leveraging](#)
- ✧ [Points to Attract, Prepare, and Retain Effective Personnel National Study](#)
- ✧ [of Special Education Funding 2026](#)
- ✧ [How Federal Policy Creates Disparities in Special Education Funding](#)

Exemplar



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Council for Exceptional Children

Agenda

- Background: about CEC
- Issue area: educator shortages
- State-level advocacy
- Federal advocacy
- Elevating your voice: key takeaways



Council for Exceptional Children

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving the success of children and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents.

CEC has local [Units](#) in all 50 states and Canada, as well as 18 optional [Special Interest Divisions](#) focused on a specific topic, specialty area, role, or exceptionality and CEC Student Chapters at hundreds of colleges and universities.

Council for Exceptional Children

VISION

- High-quality education that is inclusive and equitable for individuals with disabilities.

MISSION

- Cultivating, supporting, and empowering education professionals who work with individuals with disabilities by:
 - Advocating for education professionals and for individuals with disabilities, and/or gifts and talents
 - Advancing professional practice and scholarly research
 - Promoting diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility
 - Building networks, partnerships, and communities

Addressing the Issue: Special Educator Shortages

Level-setting: Definition, U.S. Department of Education:

- Early childhood educators, teachers, principals and other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, school social workers), paraeducators, and faculty



The Shortage by the Numbers

- 53% of public schools reported feeling their school was understaffed entering the 2022-23 school year (NCES)
 - 65% reported being understaffed in special education teachers
- 50 percent of special education teachers leave the teaching profession within their first five years (ED)
- 43 States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia reported a shortage of qualified teachers in special education last school year (ED)

The Perfect Storm



- 7.7 million (roughly 15%) of individuals with disabilities were served under IDEA during the 2023-2024 school year. Up from 13% a decade earlier
 - From 2010 to 2020 alone, the number of students who receive special education services increased by approximately 800,000 students
- Meanwhile, reach of IDEA funding is diminishing every year
- More IDEA-eligible people requires more qualified staff

The Trajectory of Shortages

- By the 2025-26 school year, a projected shortfall of roughly 200,000 public school teachers
 - Between 2020 and 2030, 37,600 new special education teachers are required to keep up with demand (BLS)
- In 2018, there were one-quarter fewer Black and Latinx teacher candidates enrolled in EPPs than in 2010
- Total enrollment in EPPs fell 16% between 2009 and 2020 (ED)
 - 85,000 fewer teacher candidates were enrolled in teacher preparation programs in 2020-21 than in 2012-13 (Learning Policy Institute)
 - 38% decline in enrollment in EPP nationally post-pandemic (ED)

This All Sounds Very Scary...



Advocacy: The Basic Formula

The Congressional Management Foundation's 3 H's

- Heart: the compelling story that will make a quick impression and help lawmakers/staff remember and care about an issue
- Head: head- a sound and logical argument including compelling data and rationale
- Health: health- the impact on the state/district

Case Study:



- MI data showed 66% decline in EPP enrollment- second highest in the nation
- Clearly, the pipeline of supply not sufficient to meet the demand for special educators
- Retention crisis post-COVID
- Losing personnel on both the attraction and retention sides compounding problem

Case Study:



- Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education submitted a proposal to study shortages in state/make recommendations on system improvements
- State legislature built on proposal to fund a 3-year study
 - Decided not to wait until the end of the study period due to urgency-began submitting recommendations immediately
- Just granted additional funds to support two more year of work
 - Funds implementation of OptiMlse

Key Partners Must Buy In!!!

- Michigan legislature
- Governor's office
- State department of Ed
- IHEs
- Superintendents association
- Building principals association
- SISP associations (psych, social work, OT, PT, etc)
- Paraeducators
- Unions/teachers
- Parents



OPTIMISE.Education is a One-Stop-Shop Site to Start or Retain a Career in Special Education

Explore by Profession

Support from Special Education Associations

Steps to Get the Degree

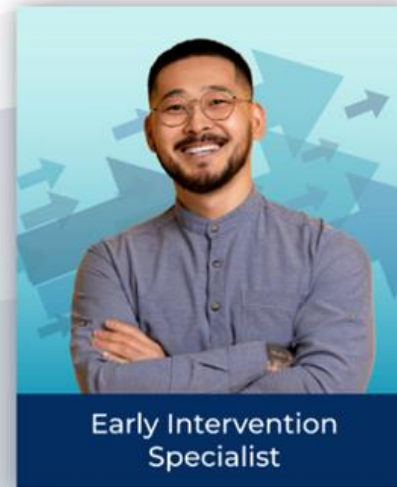
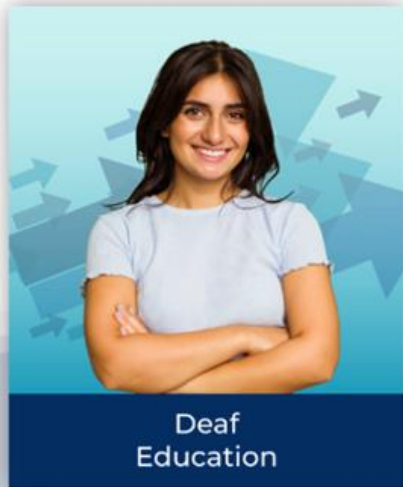
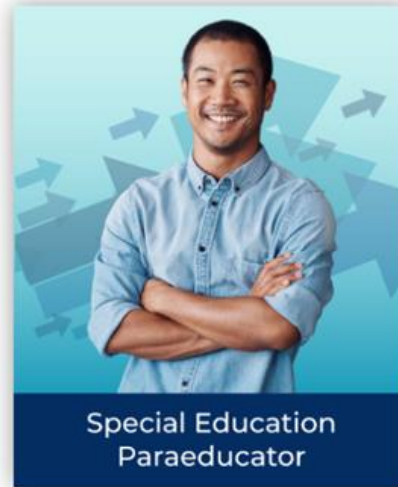
Michigan Colleges that Offer the Degree

Scholarships & Grants

Free College Opportunities

Volunteer & Job Shadowing

Promoting Ten Professions



More Issues, More Advocacy!



Example: Kentucky Ballot Initiative

- KY ballot initiative to change State Constitution to allow public funds allocated outside the public school system (vouchers)
- KYCEC against vouchers for their impact on students with disabilities
- KYCEC used existing resources to craft advocacy materials
 - CEC Position Statement on vouchers
 - Resources from National Coalition for Public Education
- Campaign launched!

Sample Social Media Image

*Kentucky CEC campaign,
Vote NO on Amendment 2*



KENTUCKY

"School Choice"

=

removal of
protections

Voucher programs
harm students with
disabilities!

- No guarantee of FAPE
- Loss of IDEA due process rights
- No guarantee of equal access

**This November, vote NO
on Amendment 2!**

Federal Advocacy: Special Education Legislative Summit

- Annual legislative conference in Washington, DC area
- Co-sponsored by CEC and Council for Administrators of Special Education (CASE)
- Hundreds of practitioners attend
- 1.5 day conference on pressing policy issues
 - Also includes advocacy training
- 1 day on Capitol Hill meeting with lawmakers

Focal Areas

- Educator shortages
- Public education funding
 - Specifically, IDEA funding
- Mental health of students and school personnel
- All tied to federal laws or pending legislation
- Provides collective advocacy opportunity; creates or builds relationships; provides topical expertise to Congressional staff; empowers advocacy at home

Our Advocates!

- SELS 2023
- Team Florida!
- Look how happy!



Our Reminder to Advocates:

- You do *not* need to be an expert in policymaking to be a changemaker. You already *are* an expert at what you do every day in this field.



- Can you share a creative approach or strategy you've seen work in recruitment and retention advocacy?
- What role do you see advocacy playing in the recruitment and retention of special educators in your region?

Closing & Next Steps

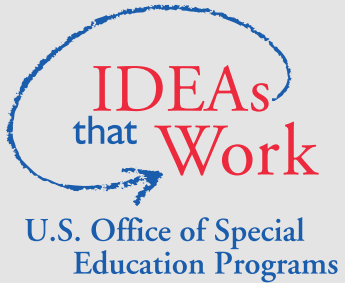
- ✧ [Register Now](#) for AACTE's Annual Meeting, Feb 21-23 in Long Beach, CA
- ✧ Save the Date for AACTE's Washington Week, June 2-June 4
- ✧ End-of-Session Survey



The background of the slide is a solid blue color. Scattered around the central text box are several stylized illustrations of hands. Some hands are clapping, with short lines radiating from them to indicate motion. Other hands are giving a thumbs-up gesture. The hands are drawn in various shades of blue and purple, suggesting a diverse group of people. A white rectangular box with a thin border is centered on the slide, containing the text "Thank You".

Thank You

Disclaimer



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CEEDAR Overview

- ✧ National Technical Assistance Center
- ✧ Provides assistance to collaborating teams of state departments of education, institutes of higher education, and local education agencies to ensure effective teachers and leaders for each student.
- ✧ Currently partnering with 19 states
- ✧ Resources available at CEEDAR.ORG

Our Mission

To support students with disabilities (SWDs) in achieving college- and career-ready standards by building the capacity of state personnel preparation systems to prepare teachers and leaders to implement evidence-based practices (EBPs) within multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).



Sample Photos



*Feel free to use these images anywhere throughout the presentation