

A Message from CEC President Mikki Garcia to members. See the [Membership Webpage](#) for information on joining CEC.

January 31, 2017

### **In a time of uncertainty, CEC remains a constant.**

Dear CEC Members:

The Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) Board of Directors just completed its first meeting of the year at our offices across the Potomac River from the nation's capital. Given a new presidential administration and the start of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, the consensus around the board table is that special education needs to be prepared for a sustained period of intense advocacy work. The shifting sands of public policy are driving authority and accountability away from the federal government to the states. In fact, not since the mid-1970s and the passage of Public Law 94 -142 has the special education and early intervention field seen so much uncertainty. Many CEC members have expressed deep concern over the future of our field. **I want to assure you that, while the world around us is fraught with great challenges, one thing will remain constant: The Council for Exceptional Children, its units, and its divisions will be there for you.**



*Mikki Garcia*  
CEC President

CEC's board and professional staff are fully committed to **our mission as a professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the success of children with exceptionalities.** We will continue to accomplish our mission through **advocacy, standards, and professional development.**

#### **Advocacy with Impact**

The board has acted to reinvigorate our leadership role in advocacy. As a result, we will continue to advance our positions before policy leaders and work ardently to develop champions among elected officials. That said, we need all of our members to help voice what works and what needs to be improved at the national, state, and local levels; we need all of our members to be active participants and get involved.

- If you are not receiving CEC's weekly [Policy Insider](#), please sign up today. Each week, you will receive the latest updates as well as calls to action in the [Legislative Action Center](#) where you can reach your members of Congress instantly.
- Join CEC as we take our message directly to the halls of Congress and the U.S. Department of Education in July at the [Special Education Legislative Summit](#). This joint

summit with the Council of Administrators of Special Education is an essential aspect of our ability to shape special education and early intervention policy.

A CEC member workgroup is currently underway to draft CEC's principles and recommendations concerning the future reauthorization of IDEA. The CEC Board of Directors will seek input on the draft from CEC units and divisions at the 2017 Representative Assembly being held in conjunction with the CEC Annual Convention in Boston in April. Ultimately, the board will adopt a set of principles and recommendations that will drive CEC's IDEA advocacy efforts.

### **Standard Bearer**

As your professional association, CEC defines special education through our professional standards and practice, which are used by higher education and state certification agencies when considering the practice of special education. We will remain the standard bearer of our field by confidently addressing the changes in the preparation and practice of educators. To ensure the timely release of the standards in 2019, CEC currently has a workgroup developing the process by which we update our [Professional Standards and Practice](#). In addition, CEC is poised to release a new framework on high-leverage practices for special education teachers that will inform teacher preparation and practice for the future.

### **Principled Professional Development**

One of the great strengths of CEC is our evidence-based approach to professional development and practice. In December 2016, the board of directors reaffirmed and updated CEC's strategic plan. This plan calls for CEC to devote more professional development resources to materials and programs that support the career needs of members. The shortage of trained special educators has gone from troubling to an acute crisis. CEC will play a leading role in supporting the profession in addressing this crisis of capacity.

In times like these, we must to be reminded of [CEC's core values](#). We are an association of vision, integrity, and inclusiveness. We must be even more steadfast in our commitment to these values, especially **our commonly held value of inclusivity, demonstrated by our commitment to diversity, caring, and respect for the dignity and worth of all individuals.**

Although the challenges are great, I know you will remain hopeful. I urge you to recommit yourself to the valuable work you do every day supporting children with exceptionalities and to be reassured in knowing that CEC is here to support you. I am encouraged by the work set out by the board of directors for the coming year and how this work will benefit children and youth with exceptionalities, their families, and the professionals who work on their behalf.

I would love to hear your thoughts and ideas so please do not hesitate to [contact me](#). Together we can definitely make a difference.

Sincerely,

