

CEC Releases New Position on Special Education Teacher Evaluation

Document provides guidance for states, districts as growing number of states revamp their teacher evaluation systems

Arlington, Va., Oct. 24, 2012 – Recognizing the need for high-quality processes that will effectively and accurately gauge a special education teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom and drive continuous improvement and excellence, the **Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)** today released its *Position on Special Education Teacher Evaluation*, providing guidance for states and districts to consider as they endeavor to design and implement new teacher evaluation systems.

With research showing that the single biggest school-based factor influencing student achievement is teachers, teacher evaluation systems have recently risen to prominence. And the Obama administration has included incentives to change teacher evaluation systems in signature education programs including the Race to the Top competition and the NCLB/ESEA state waivers that have been granted by the U.S. Department of Education.

“States and districts are now grappling with how to measure teacher performance, and our intent with this position is to fill a void that we know exists for how to evaluate teachers of children with exceptionalities. This is particularly critical in Race to the Top states as well as those that have received ESEA flexibility waivers,” said CEC President Margaret L. McLaughlin. “We know that special educators have a unique and complex role within schools that is not often well understood, so we are trying to help states and districts appropriately incorporate special education teachers into new evaluation systems.”

CEC’s position calls for evaluation systems to:

- **Include Fundamental System-Wide Component** – Evaluation systems must include all educators; must identify appropriate professional development opportunities for all teachers based on the results of their evaluations; must support continuous improvement; and must be open and transparent to the teacher being evaluated.
- **Identify the Complex Role of the Special Education Teacher** – Evaluations must clearly identify and be based on a special education teacher’s specific role and responsibilities during a given school year; must take into account the population of children and youth and their range of exceptionalities that special education teachers instruct; and must be conducted by evaluators with expertise in delivery models and teaching practices in special education.

- **Measure the Use of Evidence-Based Practices** – Evaluations must be based on multiple reliable measures and indicators that support valid measurement of special education teacher effectiveness; must never be based solely on student growth; and statistical models that estimate a teacher’s contribution to student growth should not be applied to any teacher until there is a general consensus among researchers that the model provides a valid estimate of a teacher’s contribution to student growth.
- **Recognize the Professionalism of Special Education Teachers** – Evaluations must respect special education teachers’ professional practice and provide them with constructive and actionable feedback, resources, and opportunities to assist in addressing any areas for professional development and lead to well-grounded personnel decisions; and special education teachers must have reasonable caseloads and paperwork responsibilities, competitive salaries, benefits, access to resources, and positive working conditions.
- **Continually Incorporate Findings From Research** – Leaders of evaluation systems reform must collaborate to ensure that the development and implementation of evaluation systems are carried out in a systematic, coordinated, and efficient manner; research should identify reliable measures and indicators of student growth that can be validly used to evaluate special education teachers; and policy makers and leaders should consider the intended and unintended consequences of wide-scale implementation of teacher evaluation systems without more extensive research and development efforts focusing on special education teachers.

CEC collaborated with a number of leading experts in the field of special education, as well as soliciting input from a number of its members – teachers, administrators, teacher educators and preservice teachers – to inform the development of this position.

[Read the background document](#), which provides greater detail about the history of teacher evaluation and gives examples of several different systems currently being implemented, or [read the full position](#).

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The Council for Exceptional Children is an international community of professionals who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. CEC’s mission is to improve, through excellence and advocacy, the education and quality of life for children and youth with exceptionalities and to enhance engagement of their families.

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