



COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, INC

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CASE Discussion on Best Practices on Highly Qualified And CASE Position Statement on Highly Qualified

Best Practices

As stated within its Mission and Beliefs, the Council of Administrators of Special Education believes that all students within the United States, the Canadian provinces, and other countries:

- have the right to an educational program based on high standards;
- need to be included and considered within school-based reform;
- and their learning and behavioral outcomes should be measured by meaningful assessment and utilized in making instructional and systemic changes.

Using these beliefs as a foundation, the Policy and Legislation Committee reviewed proposed legislation and recommendations related to the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002, commonly referred to as “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB). In its findings the Committee recognized the following as universal “best practices” and considerations for all educational programs for children and youth with disabilities, regardless of country in which they are served.

- Teachers should be considered highly qualified in special education if they meet the state/provincial certification requirements, which should include any required demonstration of competencies.
- Recognizing that pedagogy is at the heart of defining the special education staff, the CEC publication *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics Standards and Guidelines for Special Educators*, known informally as “The Red Book,” should be used as a baseline for content/methodologies-strategies.
- There must be resources to provide for the development of a “highly qualified” work force.
- Paraprofessional training to meet the “highly qualified” standard should include specific training appropriately matched to the environment and instructional level in which the paraprofessionals are serving.
- The definition of “highly qualified” must recognize the different knowledge and skills needed by staff for various levels of instruction/service (i.e. General Math/Algebra/Calculus, etc.) in addition to the ability level of the students.
- Special education staff must have equal access to the general education curricular resources and training.

- Various instructional models such as Collaborative/Co-teaching should be recognized and utilized as an appropriate method of meeting the “highly qualified” standard for the delivery of instruction.
- Teacher preparatory programs should contain more core academic content requirements at the preservice program level.
- Full continuum of services must remain as an option and by definition will present special considerations with alternate types of environments (i.e. Self contained classes, alternative schools, state/provincial operated schools for sensory impairments, adjudicated facilities, etc).
- All schools receiving public funds for the education of students with disabilities should meet the same requirements for “highly qualified” (charter/public-voucher).
- Considerations for various locations such as those for rural areas must be provided through additional flexibility including utilizing the technology of distance learning, consultative services, etc.
- Recognizing state/provincial autonomy in determining “highly qualified,” reciprocity is a major issue that must be acknowledged and addressed through regulations and/or legislation.

Upon the recommendation of the Policy and Legislation Committee, the CASE Board of Directors adopted the following position statement on “highly qualified personnel.”

Position Statement on Highly Qualified Personnel
4/14/04 New Orleans, Louisiana

CASE strongly supports the concepts presented in the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 legislation that all students, including students with disabilities, should be served by staff appropriately prepared to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. This act is referred to as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and is specific to programs provided by the United States Department of Education, but CASE believes that students within the Canadian provinces and other countries are also entitled to similar quality instruction and programs.

“Highly qualified” as defined by NCLB relates only to the delivery of core content instruction. However, CASE believes the unique skills of the special educator in areas of methodologies, adaptations, accommodations, modifications, and functional skills, are indicative of a status of “highly qualified” in special education. Acknowledgement of the importance of these skills as well as core content competencies should be considered in the definition of “highly qualified” for all teachers. CASE further recognizes that educational licensure is within the jurisdiction of each state and province and does not intend to impose specific standards on this certification process.

CASE believes appropriately defining “highly qualified” teacher, paraprofessional and related-service personnel, strengthens the tenets of the IDEA. CASE believes any legislation and/or regulations should provide appropriate time for paraprofessionals, related-service personnel and teachers to meet standards for “highly qualified” as defined by the various state/federal/provincial guidelines. Recognizing the importance of a highly qualified work force to serve students with disabilities, CASE urges all levels of government (Executive/Legislative/State/Provincial/Local) to provide additional support for work force/professional development.