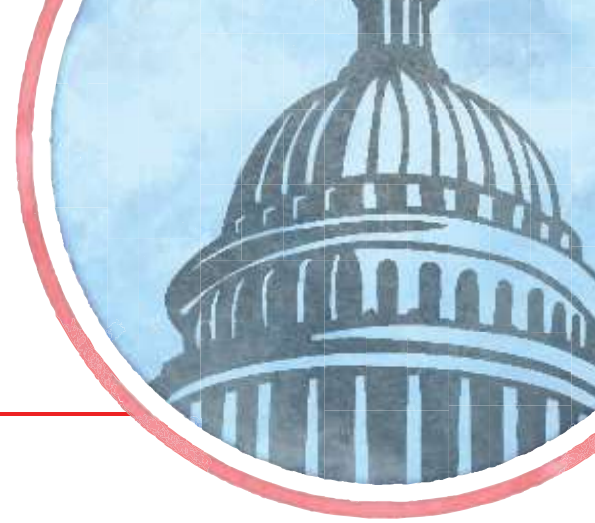


ISSUE BRIEF



Higher Education Act

RECOMMENDATIONS

CEC urges Congress to:

- **Require teacher preparation programs to train all future educators to address the needs of students with disabilities and gifts and talents.**
- **Emphasize high-quality clinical experiences for teacher candidates to demonstrate their content and pedagogical knowledge prior to program completion (e.g., edTPA) in all teacher preparation programs.**
- **Address the chronic shortages in special education through well-funded student loan forgiveness and scholarship programs (e.g., the TEACH Grant Program).**
- **Ensure that accountability measures for teacher preparation programs do not rely on value-added measures of teachers once in the classroom, as they are not valid or reliable.**
- **Increase postsecondary education opportunities for students with disabilities by creating new and sustaining existing programs, including the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID), to**
 - **increase access, recruitment, existing retention, and completion rates for students with disabilities;**
 - **identify and promote effective transition practices; and**
 - **increase access to instructional materials and dissemination of best practices related to postsecondary students with disabilities.**

BACKGROUND

The Higher Education Act is up for reauthorization, and there is activity on both the House and Senate sides to develop a reauthorization bill that reflects the appropriate federal role in supporting higher education. The law currently authorizes many federal aid programs and competitive grants to support innovation in higher education, reporting requirements for institutions, and much more. The current statute was signed into law on August 14, 2008, and included substantive changes affecting teacher preparation.

State of Special and Gifted Education Teachers

Children and youth with disabilities and gifts and talents across the nation rely on the expertise of professionals who are fully prepared to provide individualized instruction, which is the heart of special education.

Unfortunately, the challenges continue in the classroom as special educators leave the profession at nearly twice the rate of general educators. The cost of teacher turnover is estimated to be more than \$4 billion per year to school districts, not to mention the cost to students and communities. The national shortage of special educators, coupled with their high attrition and low retention rate, requires a federal response.

Research has demonstrated that the quality of a teacher is the most important school-based factor for improving student outcomes.

Since the passage of IDEA in 1975, it has been difficult to recruit and retain special educators. In fact, 49 states continue to report a shortage of special educators and 90% of high-poverty school districts report difficulty in attracting well-prepared special education teachers.

Well-prepared educators serving high-ability learners is key to students' positive outcomes.

Educators must have a robust professional working environment and be well prepared to support all learners.

Access to Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities

As acknowledged by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, despite significant strides in public policy, people with disabilities remain the poorest, least employed, and least educated minority in America. Without the education and training needed to start a career, young people with disabilities are trapped in a pattern of perpetual poverty and dependence upon state and federal benefits. Of all disability groups, youth with intellectual disability have the lowest rates of education, work, or preparation for work after high school.

The proportion of working-age people with disabilities who are in the labor force fell from 25% in 2001 to 16% in 2014. Researchers have projected that 63% of all U.

S. jobs by 2018 will require some postsecondary education and that 90% of new jobs in growing industries with high wages will require, at a minimum, some postsecondary education.

Individuals with intellectual disability should have access to postsecondary education that meets their individual needs and has a positive impact on their rate of employment and wages, social networks, self-determination skills, and community living.