



Strengthen Teacher Certification Programs Regarding Education of Students with Disabilities

Goal: In Texas, students with disabilities are included in regular education classrooms with access to highly qualified teachers.

Problem: Teachers who are new to the profession (Pre-Service) and experienced teachers who are unfamiliar with the inclusion of students with disabilities (In-Service) are in great need of professional training for making reasonable accommodations in their instructional methods, curriculum adaptation, and classroom management which will enhance the opportunity for success for all students.

Special populations present a greater-than-average challenge to educators, who must possess greater skills and training to provide these students with appropriate educations.

Recommendation: The Texas Legislature should instruct the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the State Board of Education, and all teacher certification organizations to incorporate the knowledge and skills needed to include all children into the classrooms of Texas' schools and to include a field experience component of two semesters for university programs and 120 clock hours for alternative certification programs.

Specific Recommendations for Change: The Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) recommends that the Texas Legislature instruct the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the State Board of Education, and all teacher certification organizations:

- To incorporate into pre and in-service training for teachers the knowledge and skills needed to include all children into the classrooms of Texas' schools. This information should include, but not be limited to, the following Special Education competences:
 - historical and legal information
 - curricular and classroom accommodation
 - knowledge of specialists and their services
 - effective participation in The Admission, Review and Dismissal Process (ARD)/Individualized Education Plans (IEP) planning and implementation
 - individual and classroom management techniques
 - resource identification and acquisition; and
 - other competencies that would enhance the inclusion of students with disabilities in a regular classroom.
- Training should also include a field experience component of two semesters for university programs and 120 clock hours for alternative certification programs.

Background/Justification:

Students with disabilities are being included in all facets of public education due to increased knowledge and understanding of the benefits of inclusion, legislation, court rulings, and human rights advocacy.

This unprecedented access to regular education is successful only if all teachers are knowledgeable and skilled in providing the educational services outlined in the Individualized Education Plans

(IEPs), collaborating with Special Service providers, working with families, and making reasonable accommodations in their classrooms and curriculum.

Texas has a critical shortage of both pre and in-service teachers who are highly qualified in Special Education. Given that thousands of teaching vacancies exist each year at the beginning of school in our districts and that 37,000 teachers are leaving the profession within five years of service,¹ it is necessary that appropriate training be available so that teachers are confident in their abilities to perform their jobs in a professional manner which will promote better and longer term service. In addition, 6326 teachers, annually, are receiving Alternative Education certification.² These programs are typically even less time- and programmatically-intensive than those at traditional universities. Therefore all teacher training programs, both college/university and alternative programs, must include basic information regarding the education of students with disabilities.

¹ Susan Combs, State Comptroller report: <http://www.window.state.tx.us/specialrpt/teachersalary04/>

² <http://www.texaseducationinfo.org>

For more information:

Jeff Miller, Advocacy, Inc., (512) 454-4816, jmiller@advocacyinc.org

Linda Parrish, The Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University, (979) 709-7264, l-parrish@tamu.edu