



*National Coalition on*  
**Personnel Shortages  
in Special Education  
and Related Services**

[www.specialedshortages.org](http://www.specialedshortages.org)

## **About Us**

The National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (NCPSSERS) is a national coalition comprised of more than 30 participating member organizations. For 10 years NCPSSERS has been dedicated to addressing the issue of shortages in special education and related services personnel in schools.

## **Our Mission**

The mission of NCPSSERS is to sustain a discussion among all stakeholders on the need for and value of special education, related services, and early intervention; and to identify, disseminate, and support implementation of national, state, and local strategies to remedy personnel shortages and persistent vacancies for the benefit of all children and youth.

## **Our Purpose**

- Develop and share information related to personnel shortages among member organizations
- Engage in advocacy at the federal, state, and local levels for implementation of strategies to remedy personnel shortages and persistent vacancies
- Monitor, track, and collect related data and information
- Develop and disseminate recommendations related to policy and practice for dealing with personnel shortages and persistent vacancies
- Bring together stakeholders to work collaboratively to address personnel shortages and persistent vacancies in special education, related services, and early intervention
- Seek funding to support the Coalition in developing and implementing strategies related to personnel shortages and persistent vacancies

## **Participating Member Organizations**

AG Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard  
of Hearing

AASA: The School Superintendents  
Association

American Association of Colleges for  
Teacher Education

American Counseling Association

American Dance Therapy Association	National Association of School Nurses
American Federation of Teachers	National Association of School Psychologists
American Music Therapy Association	National Association of Secondary School Principals
American Occupational Therapy Association	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
American Physical Therapy Association	National Center for Learning Disabilities
American Psychological Association	National Consortium on Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities
American School Counselor Association	National Education Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association	National School Boards Association
Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf	School Social Work Association of America
Council for Exceptional Children	Seton Hall University
Council of Administrators of Special Education	The Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired
Fairfax County Public Schools	The IRIS Center
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education	University of Maryland—College Park, Department of Hearing & Speech Sciences
Montgomery County Public Schools	

#### Co-Chairs

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## **Improving Quality & Availability of Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs**

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The National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (NCPSSERS) is a national coalition of more than 30 organizations spanning educators, administrators, higher education faculty, researchers, and families.

NCPSSERS is involved in creating policy solutions to address the persistent and pervasive challenge of shortages in professions that serve over 6 million children and youth with disabilities. Improving the quality of preparation of special educators and related service personnel – now known as specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) – and recruiting more individuals to pursue these careers is critical to addressing our nation's shortage.

**49 States have a shortage of special education teachers and/or specialized instructional support personnel**

**This shortage has existed since the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act became law in 1975**

Source: U.S. Department of Education  
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/pol/tsa.pdf>

As the U.S. Department of Education moves forward in thinking about changes to teacher preparation programs, NCPSSERS would like to highlight the following:

- NCPSSERS believes any federal teacher preparation policy must serve to incentivize growth in special education and specialized instructional support personnel professions to ensure students with disabilities have access to an adequate supply of professionals to meet their needs.
- NCPSSERS is concerned that the proposed accountability framework for teacher preparation programs now under discussion may exacerbate the special education shortage by (1) possibly reduce the number of special education programs available at Institutions of Higher Education; (2) lead to fewer special educators entering into the profession.
- Reforms in teacher preparation programs – particularly as it relates to new accountability measures – must reinforce a greater emphasis of all educators to be prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- NCPSSERS is concerned regarding the use of value-added data to determine the effectiveness of a special education preparation programs for the following reasons:
  - Value-added measures that link K-12 student and teacher performance back to the teacher preparation program has raised significant concerns among researchers regarding the validity for special educators, due to many factors including that students with disabilities

comprise a smaller population within a school/classroom and larger numbers are needed to create reliability in VAM<sup>1</sup>.

- Example: University of Central Florida is a large teacher preparation institution, graduating 1102 program completers. However, only 138 of these teachers -- or 12.6% -- were captured in the Florida Department of Education database as being able to track back to UCF. The rest were eliminated from the overall count for a number of reasons illustrated in the attached document.
- Value-added measures, when used to determine teacher performance based on K-12 student performance, is neither valid nor reliable for students who receive their instruction from more than one educator, the typical instructional model for students with disabilities who receive instruction from special educators, general educators, and often specialized instructional support personnel<sup>2</sup>.
- Value-added measures are limited to tested grades and subjects, failing to recognize the other critical factors -- such as social-emotional learning -- that must be a focus on K-12 and teacher preparation programs. By having such a narrow focus, it sends a message that other criteria are less important to students' educational success.
- Consider current efforts underway to increase accountability and preparedness within teacher preparation programs such as: development of performance assessments (i.e. edTPA); residency programs; development of CAEP, a new accrediting body with rigorous new professional standards; state pilots in multiple states led by the Council of Chief State School Offices and supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs to strengthening program approval, state licensing and certification requirements and statewide data systems.
- Currently, there are 3 Federal efforts that have a specific focus to increase the pipeline of special educators and related service personnel: IDEA -- Part D Personnel Preparation Grants, and HEA's TEACH Grants and Teacher Quality Partnership Grants. All of these programs serve to attract and keep individuals in the special education profession.

*For More Information, Please Contact NCPSSERS Co-Chairs*

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<sup>1</sup> National Research Council. Preparing Teachers: Building Evidence for Sound Policy. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Steele, J. L., Hamilton, L. S., & Stecher, B. M. (2010). Incorporating student performance measures into teacher evaluation systems (Technical Report No. TR-917-CAP). Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from [http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical\\_reports/TR917.htm](http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR917.htm)