

The Council for Exceptional Children's

POSITION ON SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER EVALUATION



Council for
Exceptional
Children

The voice and vision of special education

CEC MISSION

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.

CEC VISION

The Council for Exceptional Children is a premier education organization, internationally renowned for its expertise and leadership, working collaboratively with strategic partners to ensure that children and youth with exceptionalities are valued and full participating members of society. As a diverse and vibrant professional community, CEC is a trusted voice in shaping education practice and policy.

Copyright © 2012 by the Council for Exceptional Children

2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000
Arlington, VA 22202
Voice: 703/620-3660
TTY: 703/264-9446
Fax: 703/264-9494
www.cec.sped.org





SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER EVALUATION BACKGROUND

In recent years, school reform efforts have increasingly focused on ways to evaluate and improve teacher performance. This is in part a response to recent research demonstrating that teachers are the most important school-based factor in determining student achievement (Goldhaber, 2010; Hanushek, 1998; Rice-King, 2003). But, just as research has confirmed the importance of teachers, several studies of teacher evaluation systems—the primary method of judging how teachers perform—have found that, more often than not, these systems fail to differentiate between effective and ineffective teachers, are unrelated to professional development, and do not incorporate information about teacher impact on student performance (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). This, coupled with new federal incentives, led policy makers to shift their focus in the area of teacher quality. Specifically, policies have shifted from considering whether teachers meet predetermined professional requirements, such as degrees attained, an approach embodied by the No Child Left Behind Act's "Highly Qualified" standards for teachers, to methods that incorporate performance-based measures (Holdheide, Goe, Croft, & Reschly, 2010). New policies refer to performance-based measures generally as "effectiveness" and involve redesigning and/or developing teacher evaluations. An important and controversial component of performance-based evaluations is the inclusion of "objective measures of student learning."

Revamping teacher evaluation systems assumed a new urgency when President Obama took office in 2009. Shortly after the inauguration, his administration began to offer federal incentives to states and districts that committed to revising their teacher evaluations. These incentives were offered through the administration's signature initiative, the Race to the Top competition; its new regulations for the

In recent years, school reform efforts have increasingly focused on ways to evaluate and improve teacher performance.

School Improvement Grants program; its requests for increased funding and authorization of the Teacher Incentive Fund; its blueprint for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), currently known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB); and, finally, its waiver application for relief from ESEA/NCLB requirements. Moreover, the idea that teacher evaluation systems need improvement has strong bipartisan support in Congress. Indeed, both the House and Senate proposals to reauthorize ESEA/NCLB included requirements for federally mandated state teacher evaluation systems. The Senate education committee eventually passed a watered-down permissible version, merely supporting states and districts that choose to implement new systems, but not requiring them. This was largely in response to the concerns raised by CEC and others in the education advocacy community. The House education committee, on the other hand, passed a stronger version that would mandate the use of federally prescribed components and require federal oversight of state implementation.

One common factor in almost all of the federal policies about teacher evaluation is that they require teacher evaluations to incorporate “objective measures of student growth” in a significant amount. Yet, despite this, most experts agree that very little research supports including student growth measures in teacher evaluation systems, and almost none indicates how to measure student growth or relate student growth to teacher performance (Braun, 2005; Steele, Hamilton, & Stecher, 2010). Regardless, because of federal requirements, states and local districts have had to forge ahead. As a result, the current state of policy and practice across the nation is a patchwork of approaches, and all states and local districts are grappling with how to measure student growth, especially for students with disabilities (Holdheide, Browder, Warren, Buzick, & Jones, 2012).

The most commonly discussed method used to incorporate student growth into teacher evaluations is a statistical model known as “value added.” In its simplest form, a value-added model aggregates

The current state of policy and practice across the nation is a patchwork of approaches, and all states and local districts are grappling with how to measure student growth, especially for students with disabilities.

student test scores, generally from state-mandated assessments, with a few other factors such as school and student demographics and produces a score for the teacher which purports to describe the teacher’s impact on student growth (Lipscomb, Teh, Gill, Chiang, & Owens, 2010). The research that exists about these models indicates they are only reliable over time (i.e., based on several years of data) with larger student populations and when the underlying assessment instruments are fair, accurate, and reliable. Moreover, research has determined that value-added calculations are invalid for two teachers in a co-teaching environment, as the statistical model cannot determine which or by how much each teacher impacts student learning (Steele et. al., 2010). Additionally, most state data systems are not sophisticated enough to account for innovative models of instructional organization (Watson, 2012). While value-added models cause some concern for all teachers, they raise specific concerns for any educator who works with students with disabilities.

Because of these concerns and the lack of proven methods, there is increasing recognition that evaluating the effectiveness of teachers of students with disabilities needs singular attention. Currently, there is no consensus and almost no research about how these teachers might be evaluated (Holdheide et. al., 2010). Indeed, very few states and districts are addressing the unique challenges associated with evaluating special education teachers, and this is an area where much work remains.

The debate around teacher evaluation in the United States represents only one perspective on this important issue. CEC hopes this document will contribute to a global dialogue that will bring forward good ideas and inspire discussion about the many models of teacher evaluation.

CEC's Initiatives

In 2009, CEC convened an expert advisory group to consider the current state of teacher evaluation and assist CEC's policy and advocacy team in developing initial recommendations for including educators who work with students with disabilities into teacher evaluation systems. This group represented a wide variety of perspectives and its members were from districts and states around the nation where new teacher evaluation systems were being piloted and implemented. This included Denver, Colorado; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Guilford County, North Carolina; and Fairfax, Virginia. CEC incorporated its initial recommendations about teacher evaluation systems into CEC's ESEA Reauthorization Recommendations and has used these to guide its work.

In October of 2011, CEC again focused on this issue. At that time, the CEC Board of Directors discussed the current state of teacher evaluation systems and determined that, based on the importance of this topic to CEC members, the field and the organization should investigate it further and develop (1) a report on the current state of research, policy, and practice; and (2) a position on teacher evaluation. While teacher evaluation systems involve many professionals, including principals and administrators, special education teachers are at the heart of the matter and are a core constituency of CEC. As such, CEC has focused on how these systems impact teachers and their effectiveness. CEC firmly believes that any

CEC hopes this document will contribute to a global dialogue that will bring forward good ideas and inspire discussion about the many models of teacher evaluation.

teacher evaluation system must involve teacher input and expertise and help them develop throughout their career.

To draft the CEC's Position on Special Education Teacher Evaluation, CEC collaborated with a panel of experts who identified research, policy and practice regarding the current state of special education teacher evaluation and identified challenges and recommendations for the field. At CEC's 2012 convention, CEC members commented on the topic both through CEC's Representative Assembly and at a Town Hall open to all attendees. Following this, CEC received over 600 comments on special education teacher evaluation online from members. Based on all of this input, CEC drafted a position statement. CEC then asked another panel of experts to comment on the draft position statement and received feedback from close to 40 of the nation's top educators, researchers and policy experts. Finally, CEC's Representative Assembly reviewed the draft and ultimately, CEC's Board approved CEC's Position on Special Education Teacher Evaluation.



Examples of Current Practice*

To provide context for ongoing discussions about special education teacher evaluation and CEC's Position Statement, we are presenting the following examples. Importantly, these examples are meant only to provide an idea of the varied approaches and practices around the nation; CEC does not endorse any of these practices and systems. They merely illustrate how a select number of states and districts are grappling with teacher evaluation and incorporating professionals who work with students with disabilities. CEC wants to thank Lynn Holdheide and the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality for graciously sharing these examples with us. We hope these examples promote thought and discussion about potential challenges and benefits in teacher evaluation systems.

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: The Rhode Island Model

The Rhode Island Model uses multiple measures to assess performance and provides feedback on many dimensions of professional practice, professional responsibilities, and student learning (specific information regarding the model can be located within *The Rhode Island Model: Guide to Evaluating Building Administrators and Teachers*).

Teachers, with guidance and approval from administrators, establish student learning objectives (SLOs) that measure and assess the growth of student learning in every classroom. SLOs are specific, measurable goals based on Rhode Island's content standards and aligned with specific school or district initiatives. More information regarding the student learning objectives can be located within *The Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System: Student Learning Objectives—Frequently Asked Questions*.

CEC firmly believes that any teacher evaluation system must involve teacher input and expertise and help them develop throughout their career.

Rhode Island is noteworthy because the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education tried to keep the needs of students with disabilities, as well as the needs of their teachers, in mind when developing the SLO framework. The consistent message has been that special and general educators use the same process to establish SLOs for their students. This can be noted in several ways:

- First (and foremost), all students are covered under an SLO. Teachers can set goals for subgroups as long as no subgroup is disproportionately excluded. Importantly, general education teachers are responsible for the progress and mastery of all students on their rosters—including students with disabilities.
- Second, all teachers are encouraged to set tiered goals so that targets are differentiated according to students' present levels of performance and needs. The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education partnered with special educators in early adopter districts and local institutions of higher education to draft sample SLOs. General and special educators are encouraged to work collaboratively to construct objectives that are in alignment with those of the general education class but accommodate for the specific learning needs and levels of performance for students with disabilities. Example SLOs for students with disabilities can be viewed at <http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/SLO.aspx>.

**Teacher evaluation systems are evolving and specifics within these examples may have changed.*

- Third, as in many states, special educators serve in many capacities (e.g., co-teacher, resource room, and self-contained), so this guidance document provides recommendations on how SLOs should be established across the various contexts. Guidance on how special educators should establish SLOs can be located within Rhode Island Educator Evaluation: Student Learning Objectives—Special Education—Frequently Asked Questions.

District of Columbia Public Schools: IMPACT

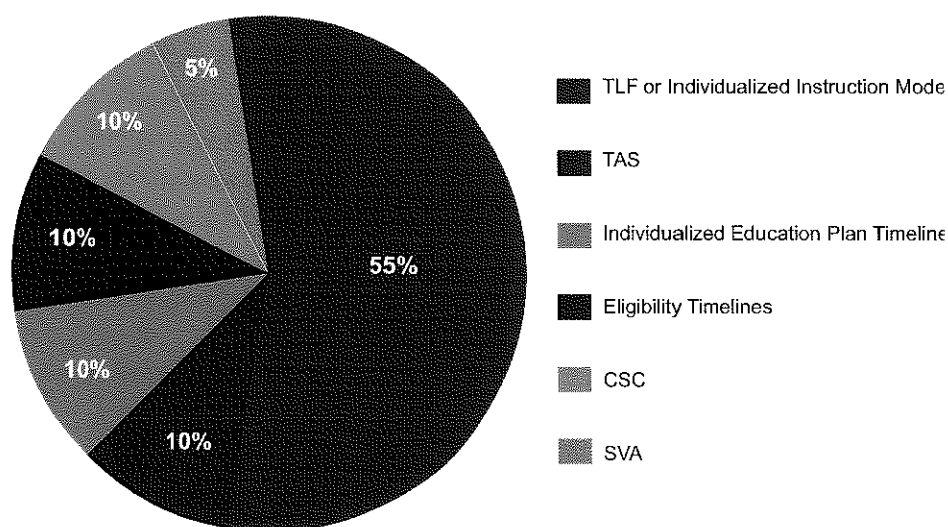
In 2009, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) launched a rigorous evaluation system, IMPACT, designed to measure the effectiveness of all school-based personnel. Through IMPACT, DCPS states that it aims to:

1. Identify the best educators in DCPS and then do everything possible to keep them.
2. Identify which educators need help and provide them with robust support.
3. Transition out the lowest-performing educators.

Although the specific evaluation criteria vary based on a teacher's grade and/or subject area, all teachers are assessed in some way according to student achievement data, instructional expertise, collaboration, and professionalism. These common measures include:

- **Teaching and Learning Framework (TLF).** TLF is a measure of instructional expertise assessed through the TLF rubric. The TLF rubric comprises nine teaching standards that provide common language and clear expectations for instruction.
- **Teacher-Assessed Student Achievement Data (TAS).** TAS is a measure of students' learning over the course of the year, as evidenced by rigorous assessments other than the state standardized test. These assessments must be approved by principals and may include a range of standardized and teacher-created assessments, including but not limited to the text and reading comprehension (TRC) assessment, the Woodcock-Johnson achievement tests, student portfolios, and end-of-course exams.

IMPACT Components for Special Educators



- **Commitment to the School Community (CSC).** CSC is a measure of core standards that reflects the extent to which an employee supports and collaborates with the larger school community.
- **School Value-Added Student Achievement Data (SVA).** SVA is a measure of a specific school's impact on student learning over the course of the school year, as evidenced by the DCPS Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS).
- **Core Professionalism (CP).** CP is a measure of four basic professional expectations for which all school-based personnel are held accountable.

In certain situations, some of the components listed previously may be modified, or additional components may be added to allow for a better assessment of specific roles and responsibilities. For example, special education teachers are also evaluated according to their ability to complete students' individualized education programs (IEPs) in a timely manner. In addition, the TLF rubric has been slightly adjusted for situations in which special education teachers are supporting students while another teacher leads whole-class instruction. See the following example:

DCPS has specifically identified several categories related to special education (e.g., special education

teachers, special education teachers—autism program, special education teachers—early childhood education, special education coordinators, and related services providers) in which the evaluation process is modified to accurately measure effectiveness according to more specific roles and responsibilities. Specific information regarding each of the categories of personnel evaluation is located

at [http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+\(Performance+Assessment\)/IMPACT+Guidebooks](http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+(Performance+Assessment)/IMPACT+Guidebooks).

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Model System for Educator Evaluation

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is implementing newly designed, comprehensive educator evaluation systems and has recently released The Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation. Important aspects of the system and process include:

- Prior to developing the regulations passed in June 2011, Massachusetts established a task force to recommend a framework for the evaluation of teachers and administrators that included special educators.
- The new Massachusetts regulations allow for considerations as follows: “The district shall adapt the indicators based on the role of the teacher to reflect and to allow for significant differences in assignments and responsibilities” (this requirement can be found at 603 CMR. 35.03).
- The Massachusetts framework defines standards and indicators of effective teaching practice that are common to all teachers. The model system includes rubrics that are designed to include all teachers who work with special populations (e.g., students with disabilities, students with significant cognitive disabilities, and English language learners), and additional guidance on customizing the rubrics for use with special populations is under development.
- “Educator Plans shall be designed to provide educators with feedback for improvement, professional growth, and leadership” (this requirement can be found at 603 CMR 35.06[3] [d]).



- Currently, Massachusetts is working on outreach to identify needs and priorities specific to evaluators to build knowledge and professional development needs of special educators and a variety of professional development supports for district capacity building.
- Guidance on measures of teacher effectiveness, including those specific to special educators, is under development.

Potential Challenges to Consider

Throughout this process, CEC and the expert advisory panel have identified issues and challenges that policy makers, administrators, and researchers who are redesigning or implementing teacher evaluation systems must consider when including special education teachers. Importantly, this list is not exhaustive, nor are all of the challenges fully developed. While the CEC's Position attempts to address these challenges, we encourage continuing discussion and contemplation of these important issues as teacher evaluation systems are developed.

- **Accurately Measuring Growth of Students With Disabilities:** There are unique challenges in accurately measuring growth of students with disabilities and connecting that growth to teacher effects. Little is known about using student growth as a component of teacher evaluation. This is the case for all students but even more so for students with disabilities—most particularly for students participating in the alternate assessment. Designers should consider how students with disabilities, and their teachers, fit into existing and/or potential measures of growth in teacher evaluation and think through considerations of implementation for students with disabilities (see *Using Student Growth to Evaluate Educators of Students With Disabilities: Issues, Challenges, and Next Steps: A Forum of State Special Education and Teacher Effectiveness and Researchers and the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality's Research & Policy*

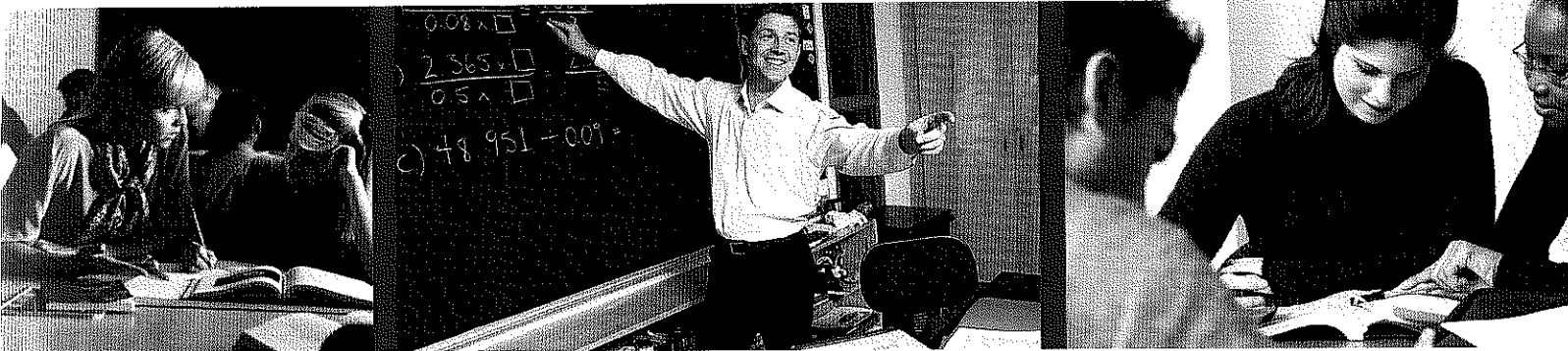
Brief *Measuring Teachers' Contributions to Student Learning Growth for Nontested Grades and Subjects*).

- **Use of Value-Added Models:** Value-added methods are concerning for educators for many reasons, including evidence that they fail to isolate one teacher's effort or impact on students, especially in team-teaching environments or where students work with multiple educators; teacher ratings overall are highly unstable; such methods tend to rate teachers lower when they teach students with disabilities or English language learners even when they incorporate statistical methods to "control" for student characteristics; and evidence indicates that teachers who rate highest on low-level multiple choice tests currently in use by most states are not those who raise scores on assessments of more-challenging learning.
- **Using Accurate Measures of Instructional Practice:** Measures used to judge instructional practice (e.g., observation protocols, student and parent surveys, and evaluation of artifacts) must be appropriate for teachers of students with disabilities and we should consider whether the field may benefit by augmenting existing protocols to ensure they incorporate specific evidence-based instructional practices for students with disabilities (e.g., direct and explicit instruction and learning strategy instruction) and take into consideration the specific roles and responsibilities of special educators and specific curricular needs they address (e.g., secondary transition services, social and behavioral needs, and orientation and mobility).
- **Training on Observation Protocols:** Evaluators must be trained in the evaluation system and on matters specific to the roles of special educators. Educators need feedback that is relevant to their practice in addition to general teaching pedagogy. Training is needed to ensure consistency and fidelity of implementation.

- **Incorporating Co-Teaching:** There are distinct considerations for teachers (both general and special educators) serving in a co-teaching capacity. The chief consideration is how student growth will be accurately and fairly attributed to any teacher when more than one teacher contributes to student learning.
- **Movement of Students:** Due to highly specialized and often changing needs, the population of children identified as needing special education services fluctuates annually, sometimes in significant amounts, and mostly in the elementary grades. This fluctuation means students move in and out of special education classes and may not receive special education instruction for an entire year.

Bibliography

- Braun, H. (2005). *Using student progress to evaluate teachers: A primer on value-added models*. Washington, DC: Educational Testing Service.
- Goldhaber, D. (2010). *When the stakes are high, can we rely on value-added? Exploring the use of value-added models to inform teacher workforce decisions*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.
- Hanushek, E. (1998). *Conclusions and controversies about the effectiveness of school resources*. New York, NY: Federal Reserve Bank of New York Economic Policy Review.
- Holdheide, L., Browder, D., Warren, S., Buzick, H., & Jones, N. (2012). *Using student growth to evaluate educators of students with disabilities: Issues, challenges, and next steps* (Forum summary). Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.
- Holdheide, L., Goe, L., Croft, A., & Reschly, D. J. (2010). *Challenges in evaluating special education teachers and English language learner specialists* (TQ Research & Policy Brief). Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.
- Lipscomb, S., Teh, B., Gill, B., Chiang, H., & Owens, A. (2010). *Teacher and principal value-added: Research findings and implementation practices, final report*. Cambridge, MA: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
- Rice-King, J. (2003). *Teacher quality: Understanding the effectiveness of teacher attributes*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Steele, J. L., Hamilton, L. S., & Stecher, B. M. (2010). *Incorporating student performance measures into teacher evaluation systems*. Arlington, VA: Rand Corporation.
- Watson, J. (2012). *Team teaching practices affect value-added measurements*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research.
- Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J., & Keeling, D. (2009). *The widget effect: Our national failure to acknowledge and act on differences in teacher effectiveness*. New York, NY: The New Teacher Project.



POSITION ON SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER EVALUATION

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) recognizes the importance of special education teachers in the education of all children and youth. Special educators have always believed that children's individual learning needs should drive instruction; indeed, pedagogy is the heart of special education practice. One way to judge a special education teacher's knowledge and skill is through a thorough and valid teacher evaluation. High-quality evaluations that are rigorous, systematic, and developed collaboratively with special education teachers drive continuous improvement and excellence. The principles of good evaluation apply to all teachers. Thus, all teachers should be included in one evaluation system that is appropriately differentiated based on their professional role.

CEC believes that special education teacher evaluations are only effective if they are based on an accurate understanding of special education teachers' diverse roles, measure and support the effective use of evidence-based interventions and practices, include accurate and reliable indicators of special education teacher contributions to student growth, and promote teaching as a profession in order to address the persistent problem of special education teacher retention.

To provide the individualized, appropriate supports and services that children and youth with exceptionalities need, special education teachers deliver

instruction in many different ways and through many approaches. In all cases, special education teachers work collaboratively with other professionals as well as families to ensure that children and youth receive the specialized instruction, supports, and accommodations outlined in their individual education plan. Due to the individualized nature of special education, the precise roles of special education teachers often vary depending on a student and school's needs. For example, a special education teacher may teach in a collaborative or co-teaching model where he or she shares responsibility with other teachers; may provide direct instruction for part or all of the day, one-on-one or in small groups; and/or may consult with other educators

about the design of appropriate accommodations and modifications to curriculum and instruction. Moreover, some special education teachers provide essential services beyond instruction such as coaching, mentoring, and case management. One teacher may assume some or all of these roles depending on the needs of the children and youth they work with. Thus, to evaluate a special education teacher fairly and accurately, CEC believes an evaluation must clearly identify a special education teacher's role specific to individual students and set performance expectations based on the duties associated with those roles.

Special education teachers should be prepared for their roles in alignment with CEC's research-based standards outlined in *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards and Guidelines*. These standards provide guidance to special education teachers in the use of evidence-based practices and interventions that inform instructional practice. Evaluations should measure and support the use of evidence-based interventions and practices and be consistent with CEC's professional standards.

CEC also believes evaluations should include evidence-based measures of a special education teacher's contribution to student learning. Student growth should be one of many indicators of special education teacher effectiveness within a comprehensive evaluation system. Evaluations based on student growth alone, however, cannot validly determine the effectiveness of a special education teacher. Furthermore, when measuring student growth, evaluations should not use a student's progress on their goals, objectives, or benchmarks on the individualized

education program (IEP) as a measure of a special education teacher's contribution to student growth. Doing so may compromise the integrity of the IEP, shifting its focus from what is designed to be a child-centered document to the performance of the teacher. The development and implementation of an IEP, however, should be included in special education teachers' evaluations as this is a primary responsibility of their professional role.

In addition, teacher evaluation systems must be designed to support teachers and provide them with the tools they need to be successful throughout their career. The field of education faces ongoing challenges in the preparation, recruitment, and retention of special education teachers. Thus, teacher evaluation systems must be designed to align with professional development to enhance a teacher's knowledge and skills, support induction programs for early-career special education teachers, and identify strategies to support collaboration and improve working conditions.

While special education teachers are the focus of this Position, it is important to note that the evaluation of gifted education teachers must also adhere to these same tenets. Gifted education teachers provide individualized supports and services for children and youth who demonstrate high levels of aptitude or competence in one or more domains. As such, their professional role must be included in the creation of a teacher evaluation system in the same way, and using much of the same criteria, as special education teachers. In this Position, the term "special education teacher" is meant to include special and gifted education teachers.

Therefore, it is the position of CEC that a teacher evaluation system shall:

Include Fundamental Systemwide Components

- All educators must be included in one evaluation system that promotes an effective teaching and learning environment, encourages collaboration, and is appropriately differentiated to include and address each educator's individual role and performance standards.
- Evaluation systems must be developed using research-based standards.
- Evaluation systems must be implemented with fidelity and integrity.
- Evaluation systems may include, but are not limited to, observations; evidence of a teacher's professional growth and contribution to the school and professional community; evidence of student work and learning; artifacts of practice; and surveys of a variety of individuals, including colleagues, parents, and students.
- Evaluation systems must identify appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers based on the results of their evaluations.
- Evaluation systems must support continuous improvement through the process of structured monitoring, intensive ongoing evaluation and coaching, and systemic professional development based on established research and best practice.
- Evaluation processes and all measures of teacher effectiveness must be open and transparent to the teacher being evaluated.
- Evaluation systems must ensure the confidentiality of personally identifiable teacher evaluation results,

including a process to support teacher due process rights and timely decision making in any due process action by an appropriate independent and objective authority.

- Evaluation systems should be regularly examined in light of evolving research to ensure that they are based on current approaches and best practices.
- Evaluation systems must be adequately funded.

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.
- Evaluations must articulate clear performance expectations based on professional standards that are mutually agreed upon by the special education teacher and evaluator.
- Evaluations must take into account the population of children and youth and their range of exceptionalities that special education teachers instruct and support during a given school year.
- Evaluations must be conducted by evaluators with expertise related to evidence-based service delivery models and individualized teaching practices and interventions in special education. To support useful and meaningful feedback in the evaluation, evaluators must understand how, when, and why these practices are implemented and the specific roles and responsibilities of special education teachers.
- Evaluators, including principals and other school leaders, must be trained in effective evaluation

practices that accurately reflect the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers and the children and youth they serve.

- Evaluation systems should support state, provincial, and local education agency efforts to develop and implement teacher-student data links, including, but not limited to, accurately defining the teacher of record and ensuring that special education teachers are accurately represented when they are in collaborative or co-teaching situations.

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.
- Multiple indicators of special education teacher effectiveness may include, but are not limited to: IEP development and implementation, development of lesson plans, skill in providing access to the general education curriculum, classroom environment and management, identification and implementation of appropriate instructional strategies, measures of student growth that are a fair and accurate representation of both student growth and the special education teacher's contribution to that growth, progress monitoring and assessment, collaboration with colleagues and families, contributions to the school community, and participating in ongoing professional development.
- Evaluations should never be based solely on student growth. Any evaluation that includes indicators of student growth should include multiple measures of that growth and provide an assessment that considers a teacher's contribution to growth in developmental, academic, behavioral, and functional domains.

- High-stakes personnel decisions, such as promotion, tenure, and compensation, should never be based solely on student growth or any other single indicator.
- Evaluations should not use a student's progress on their goals, objectives, and benchmarks in the IEP as a measure of a special education teacher's contribution to student growth.
- Statistical models that estimate a teacher's contribution to student growth, such as value-added models, 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

- Special education teachers must be involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the teacher evaluation process.
- 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.
- Special education teachers must have reasonable case loads and paperwork responsibilities; competitive salaries; benefits; access to resources; and positive working conditions, including collegial and administrative supports.
- Evaluations must identify, based on data from multiple measures and indicators, when teacher dismissal is appropriate.

Continually Incorporate Findings From Research

- Leaders of evaluation system reforms, including state education agencies, local education agencies, institutions of higher education, researchers, and policy makers, 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. Specifically, research must determine whether the measure/indicator supports valid assumptions about the growth of students with exceptionalities and whether that growth can be attributed to the special

education teacher or is related to other outcome indicators.

- Policy makers and leaders should fund research that informs the use of statistical models that attribute student growth to educators who teach children and youth with exceptionalities and implement pilot programs that validate their use.
- 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 that clearly link the evaluation system to improvements over time in the achievement of children and youth with exceptionalities.

Reference:

Council for Exceptional Children 2012 Policy Manual; Section Four; Part 3; Page L-9.

Date Adopted:

Approved by the Council for Exceptional Children Board of Directors 10/6/12.

What professionals are saying . . .

On any given day, or in any given week, I may work directly with families in the community, provide one on one instruction in a classroom, consult with other educators in my school about the best ways to accommodate children's needs—all of these various activities are part of my role and you must understand all of them to fairly evaluate my work.

Hannah Ehrli
CEC 2012 Teacher of the Year & Special Education Teacher
Orange County Public Schools, Florida

CEC's Position recognizes the need for one evaluation system that is differentiated based on the unique and collaborative roles of the special education teacher and clearly promotes teaching as a profession. I see myself and my teaching practice reflected and respected in this Position.

Matty B. Rodriguez-Walling
CEC 1994 Teacher of the Year & Special Education Teacher
Miami Dade County Public Schools, Florida

The opportunities created within performance evaluation for the field of special education are many. Though this work is not without its challenges, creating a stakeholder-driven, aligned, and strategic approach provides multiple avenues to impact teacher and leader effectiveness across the career continuum. It is important to design evaluation models that are grounded in empirical evidence and depict what general and special education teachers and leaders need to know and be able to do to support the academic and social growth of students with disabilities, while considering the various roles and responsibilities of special educators. This foundation creates a systemic approach that promotes, supports, and reinforces teacher and leader practice so that all students are college and career ready.

Lynn Holdheide
Deputy Director
Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, American Institutes for Research, Washington, DC

As a special education administrator, I believe that special education teacher evaluations must be designed with a clear end goal in mind: supporting teachers to improve student success. CEC's Position reflects this goal and provides needed guidance to the special education field regarding key components to be included in a special education teacher evaluation system.

George Van Horn, Ed.D.
Director of Special Education
Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation, Indiana