



Coalition Prepares Policy, Funding Agenda

The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) has prepared its major policy and funding priorities agenda for the 127th Ohio General Assembly leading into the development of the FY 2008-09 biennial state operating budget.

FUNDING

1. Fully fund the state's cost-based special education funding methodology. Ohio's system of special education funding is a six-weight system in which each weight represents a particular category of disability. The state's cost-based special education funding methodology was recently updated by OCECD on behalf of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in preparation for the 2008-09 biennial state operating budget. It was necessary to update the cost-based methodology for funding special education to reflect the increasing market-based personnel costs associated with delivering special education and related services. This update reveals that the cost of the updated weighted system would be an additional \$192-million in FY 2006 dollars. Currently, the six-weight system is funded at 90% of the current standard which was established in 2001 as part of the FY 2002-03 biennial state operating budget. Under the updated weighted system, funding of the weights at current levels is actually substantially less than 90% of actual costs. The state board of education's FY 2008-09 budget recommendations proposed funding the current

weights at 92.5% in FY 2008 and 97.5% in FY 2009. This recommendation represents a policy decision by the state board of education to fund the weighted methodology, a plan adopted and supported by the state board in previous budget recommendations, at less than 100% of 2001 costs and substantially less than 100% of today's costs. OCECD strongly supports the full funding of this updated methodology, phasing it in at an additional \$50-million per year over a four year period beginning in FY 2008.

2. Update the cost-based funding methodology on a biennial basis. Consistent with #1 above, and with language in substitute HB 431 (126th General Assembly), incorporate statutory language to require the ODE to update the cost-based methodology on a biennial basis using updated rules and the most recent fiscal year ODE personnel costs, as well as actual service level data. OCECD will continue to help the Ohio Department of Education institutionalize this effort so the methodology and weights are updated biennially. Updating the study regularly will help ensure that special education pupils are receiving the resources necessary to succeed.

3. Efforts to create a new system of funding for primary and secondary education should include special education. Any movements to revise the funding mechanism for primary and

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secondary education either through the legislative process or via constitutional amendment, including current efforts led by main line education organizations to place a constitutional amendment on the statewide ballot in November 2007, should include a special education funding system consistent with recommendations #1 and #2 above, which means special education funding will have to be a significant and specific part of any policy development process developed as a result of the initiative.

4. Fully fund preschool special education units. Fully funding existing preschool special education units and additional units as necessary to meet the needs of all preschool special education students and the districts that serve them is consistent with the recommendations of the School Readiness Solutions Group and the early care and education initiatives being advanced by Governor Strickland's administration. Ohio's school districts are required by state and federal laws to provide preschool special education services to all identified children upon their third birth date. There are currently 2,024 funded units and 1,019 unfunded units. Consistent with #1 and #2 above, OCECD supports basing preschool special education unit funding on updated personnel costs. The state board of education's recommendations for the 2008-09 biennial operating budget include funding of an additional 450 units in FY 2008 and 529 units in FY 2009, and funding of all units based on an updated salary schedule. This is 40 units short of the current FY 2007 identified need. OCECD supports fully funding all existing preschool special education units.

5. Recruitment of special education teachers and other related professionals. OCECD supports funding in the FY 2008-09 biennial operating budget to recruit and

retain qualified individuals who hold content expertise in special education, mathematics, science, and foreign language to enter the teaching profession via the alternative educator license. Funding to recruit qualified candidates is important as there are significant shortages in the identified areas listed above.

6. Catastrophic special education funding. Ohio's system of special education funding is a six-weight system in which each weight represents a particular category of disability. OCECD supports additional funding in the FY 2008-09 biennial budget to provide support to high-cost special education students. Under catastrophic special education funding, districts are reimbursed for 50% of the costs above \$26,500 for students in categories 2 through 5. The category 6 threshold is \$32,800. FY 2005 obligations (disbursed in FY 2006) were reimbursed at 46% of the calculated amounts leaving districts to pay the remaining expenses. The state board of education recommended funding catastrophic special education at 92.5% (\$31.9-million) in FY 2008, and 97.5% (\$33.6-million) in FY 2009. OCECD supports funding levels that would fund catastrophic special education at 100% of current obligations.

7. Special Education Enhancements. OCECD recommends that the Special Education Enhancements (line item 200-540) be fully funded and that the name be changed from "Special Education Enhancements" to "Special Education Targeted Funding" to more adequately reflect the purpose of this line item. Within this line item, the Ohio Coalition supports funding for the following:

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a. Parent-Mentors. This program provides support and information services to the parents of children with special needs and assists them in making informed decisions about the education of their children. Current state funding supports 60 parent mentors. OCECD strongly recommends continued state support of this important program with an expansion to 75 funded parent mentors.

b. School Psychologist Interns. This earmark supports funding to ensure there is an adequate support of school psychologists serving Ohio's school children. The program supports one year of on-the-job training licensed through the Ohio Department of Education. This training is required for state licensure. OCECD recommends continued support of the school psychologist intern earmark (\$2.85-million in FY 2008 and \$2.92-million in FY 2009) with sufficient funding to meet the rising demands for school psychologists in Ohio's schools.

POLICY

8. Support improved intervention and prevention services for at-risk special education students before, during and following incarceration. Create a State Commission on Special Education and Juvenile Justice. There is a significant over representation of children with disabilities in Ohio's juvenile detention facilities and Department of Youth Services' prisons. These students make up more than 40% of the juvenile detention population versus 14% of the school population. Consistent with the analytical work on special education and juvenile justice conducted in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Education by OCECD, the Ohio Coalition encourages the legislature to gain a better understanding of this issue and

enact appropriate intervention and prevention programs to eliminate this over representation. The first step in gaining an enhanced understanding of this policy issue is to create a state level Commission on Special Education and Juvenile Justice through statute or by Executive Order of the Governor to provide an effective forum to bring experts and stakeholders together to gain a more thorough understanding of how students with special education needs who are at-risk of incarceration are treated currently and how this treatment can be improved through more effective educational programming, including prevention and intervention initiatives, to reduce their ongoing overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system. The proposed commission should be comprised of representatives of the Ohio Commission on Juvenile Justice established by Executive Order 01-10T, state and local agencies and departments that have the authority to effect necessary changes, and parents and professionals with the expertise to suggest what changes are needed. It should be funded with sufficient dollars to provide a skilled facilitator and experienced staff support. The commission should also be charged with writing a final report and recommendations.

9. Monitor special education scholarships. OCECD supports providing students with disabilities a broad scope of opportunities to receive a high quality education. However, the Ohio Coalition has some concerns about the current system's capacity to provide adequate services in transitioning from a system that currently does not allow students to transfer to one that would allow special education students to automatically switch school districts and/or service providers.

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10. Monitor the Community Alternative Funding System (CAFS) and the transition to a new school-based Medicaid Program. The elimination of the CAFS school-based Medicaid program and the inability to restart it places additional fiscal pressure on special education funding and therefore it is important to stakeholders to encourage the development of new and effective ways to address the problem. This situation compounds special education funding pressures that relate in part to the fact that the state's cost-based special education funding methodology is not fully funded because the weights are funded at

90% and have not been updated in four years. An alternative school-based Medicaid plan was rejected by the federal government. Months have since passed with little evidence that the state is any closer to approval of an alternative plan. To the extent possible, the state should continue to pursue a new school-based program. That being said, OCECD will continue to support the requirement that state and local entities fully fund the costs of providing a free and appropriate public education. OCECD will continue to monitor CAFS and the transition to a new school-based Medicaid program.

Tool Kit Helps Parents Work with Schools

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) of the U.S. Department of Education recently announced the release of a new CD, "Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students With Disabilities: Parents' Materials." The Parent Tool Kit compiles materials identified to augment the previously released CD, "Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students with Disabilities," and offers a collection of resources on the same substantive areas addressed, including assessment, instructional practices, behavior and accommodations.

These new documents were written specifically for parents and include

information they need as they work with schools to ensure that their children are receiving a quality education. Materials included in the new Parent Tool Kit provide information that will help them become active and informed participants in IEP discussions and other decision-making meetings that support students with disabilities and their families.

To disseminate these materials, OSERS has launched a new Web site, www.osepideasthatwork.org/index.asp, which includes the materials in the Parent Tool Kit. The Web site will continue to be updated with additional materials as they become available.

Statistics, Data Available from Census Bureau

Many disability advocates need up to date statistics by state or county for people with disabilities. The 2005 American Community Survey which can be found on the web at www.factfinder.census.gov provides a lot of useful current data. Here is a national summary of the data:

* Nearly 15% of the population five years and over (40 million people) have one or more disabilities.

* For the population 16-64 years, 12% of that population (nearly 23 million people) have one or more disabilities. Of all people 16-64 years, nearly 3% have a sensory disability, more than 7% have a physical disability, and 4.5% have a mental disability. [Remember people can have more than one type of disability and show up in two categories.]

* For the population 16-64 years, only 37.5% of the people with a disability are employed. That is, more than 14 million people with disabilities who are unemployed.

* For the population 65 years and over, 40.5% of that population (more than 14 million people) have one or more disabilities. Of all people over 65 years, 16% have a sensory disability, 31% have physical disability, 11.5% have a mental disability, nearly 10% have a self-care disability, and 16.6% have a "go-outside-home disability."

* For the population five years and over who have one or more disabilities, 21.1% are below the poverty level (which is about \$9,200 for a single person). That is, more than 8 million persons have a disability and are below the poverty level. Of all people five years and over who are below the poverty level, 18.7% have a sensory disability, 21% have a physical disability, and 26.4% have a mental disability.

As a comparison, for the population five years and over with no disability, 11.3% are below the poverty level, while for the same age group with one or more disabilities, 21.1% are below the poverty level.

This data is also available by state and county at the above Census Bureau's web site.

(Editor's Note: Written by Steve Gold, The Disability Odyssey Continues. Back issues of other Information Bulletins are available online at <http://www.stevegoldada.com>, with a searchable Archive at this site divided into different subjects.)

You Can Bank On It

Premier Assistive Technology, a company that produces assistive software for reading and writing, announces the release of its one-of-kind **Talking Checkbook**, PC-based talking bank account management software. Designed to make account management and check writing truly accessible, the Talking Checkbook is for individuals who find it difficult to see small print, write in small areas, or have math difficulties. For more information go to www.emediawire.com/releases/2003/11/emw89577.php

Hands On Banking, developed by Wells Fargo as a free public service, is an innovative, entertaining program available in Spanish and English and contains no commercial content. The curriculum is designed for self-paced, individual learning for kids, teens and adults. It may also be used in the classroom and with community groups. The lessons are narrated, animated, colorful, and fun. For more information go to www.handsonbanking.org or www.elfuturoentusmanos.org

Wealth of Information Found on Web Sites

ALLIANCE Resource Database

The ALLIANCE Resource Database features a wide collection of articles, Web sites, DVDs, and other materials relevant to special education and parent involvement. Anyone can search the database, and we encourage all Parent Centers to add resources that they have developed or that they know of that would be beneficial to others in the field. Visit the site today. www.taalliance.org/ARD/default.aspx

SERRC Library on Achievement Gaps, Diversity, and Disproportionality

The Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) has put together a resource library with reports, programs, data, and best practices related to achievement gaps, diversity, and disproportionality. The resources address a variety of topics such as dialects and linguistic issues, school readiness, and juvenile justice. Visit the site at www.rffcnetwork.org/content/view/194/293/.

Bullying Prevention Web Site

PACER Center's Kids Against Bullying Web site features interactive games and activities to help students learn why bullying happens and what they can do to stop it. The site includes resources for parents and professionals. www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org/

Learning a Foreign Language

The National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange Web site has a variety of resources for people with disabilities who want to learn a foreign language. Some articles contain more general information

about world languages, while others are more specific such as strategies for teaching a foreign language to students with learning or hearing disabilities. www.miusa.org/ncde/spotlight/foreignlanguage.

Evidence for Education Publication Series

The National Dissemination Center's (NICHCY) new "Evidence for Education" publication series highlights research-based educational practices. Each module contains a research summary, practical examples, and resources for more information. The first topic developed for this series is "The Power of Strategy Instruction." www.research.nichcy.org/Evidence_TOC.asp

What Works Clearinghouse Early Childhood Intervention Report

The U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse recently released a report on early intervention center-based programs. This research review examines inclusive and targeted programs designed to increase the school readiness of young children with disabilities. Read the research reports at: www.whatworks.ed.gov/Topic.asp?tid=13&ReturnPage=default.asp.

Ethics and Intellectual Disabilities Resources

The Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University now has a section of their Web site on intellectual disabilities issues. The Web page includes a newsletter on

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ethics and intellectual disabilities and lists of books and articles on related topics. The Web site is located at: www.kennedyinstitute.georgetown.edu/intelldisabres/index.htm

Practice of Yes Training

The National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange is now offering their popular training "Practice of Yes!" for free on their Web site. The Practice of Yes! Training is a reference guide for international exchange programs on how they can include people with disabilities in their programs. To access the training materials, go to: www.miusa.org/ncde/disabilityresources/poytraining.

A Public Education Primer

The Center on Education Policy has published a report on the basics of the U.S. education system including a breakdown of the demographics of America's students and how public schools are funded. The full document can be downloaded as a PDF from: <http://www.cep-dc.org/pubs/publiceducationprimer/PublicEducationPrimer.pdf>.

Federal Programs for Youth with Mental Health Conditions

The Bazelon Center has developed a series of fact sheets on federal programs designed to meet the needs of youth with serious mental health conditions who are transitioning into adulthood. The fact sheets address nearly 60 programs covering mental health, substance abuse, higher education, and other related areas. A comprehensive analysis of all programs can also be downloaded. www.bazelon.org/publications/movingon/

E-Learning Opportunities

The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities offers the following free resources to help increase independence, productivity, integration, self determination, and inclusion for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

"Parallels in Time, Part 2," our newest online resource, is packed with hundreds of photos, videos and documents associated with the important societal and legislative milestones from 1950 through 2005. Sections include *A Place To Call Home*, *Definitions and Perspectives on Disability*, *A Place To Learn*, *Real Work*, and much, much more. This resource is available at www.mncdd.org/parallels2/index.htm.

"Partners in Education," is a six-hour, self-directed e-learning course to help parents with children with developmental disabilities better understand and maximize the benefits of special education services and inclusion for their children, is now available. Go to www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/education.

"Making Your Case" is a three-hour, self-directed course on how to communicate with public officials by effectively telling your personal story, writing a letter, providing testimony, and communicating in positive ways. Go to www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/makingyourcase to review the course.

"Partners in Employment" is a six-hour, self-directed course created to give users the practical skills needed to find real, competitive employment in their own community. Participants will receive helpful information on how to find a job, writing a resume, participating in an interview, and planning for your career. Go to www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/employment.

Questions should be directed to Colleen Wieck at MinnesotaDDCouncil@msn.com.

OCECD Slates Free Trainings

Don't miss out on the opportunity to attend these **FREE trainings** sponsored by the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities.

April 10

9:30-11:30 a.m. "Mental Health Strategies for Parents/Professionals" dealing with children with special mental health needs
12:00-2:00 p.m. "Medications for Children with Mental Health Issues" presented by Don McIntire, Ph.D.

April 24

9:30-11:00 a.m. "F.U.N. – Follow the Yellow Brick Road to Transition" for use with children in Early Intervention to Kindergarten
12:00-2:00 p.m. "Transition Drives the IEP" for use with children ages 14-22.

May 8

9:30-11:00 a.m. "Juvenile Court 101" what you need to know about family court unruly and delinquency cases presented by Susan Kieffer, Marion County Family Court

Probation Dept. Administrator
12:00-2:00 p.m. "Section 504" the civil rights law that provides for accommodations for children with disabilities that are not eligible for IEP special education services.

May 22

9:30-11:00 a.m. "MR/DD County Board Services & Their Future" MUI, Medicaid, individual options, Level 1 waivers, etc.
12:00-2:00 p.m. "Self-determination, Post-secondary services, EI Children Programs" presented by Lee Wedemeyer, Superintendent of Marion County Board of MR/DD and staff.

All trainings are held at the OCECD office in the Chase Bank Building, 165 West Center Street, 2nd Floor, Marion, Ohio. Pizza lunch is provided for all trainings.

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. Call Martha Lause at 1-800-374-2806 ext. 20 no later than one week prior to the training. Space is limited to the first 30 registrants.

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