

Education Position Statement

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities supports the position that all students have a right to learn, play and work with students their own age, with and without disabilities, in the same schools, classrooms and other educational and extracurricular programs attended by their brothers, sisters and neighbors, and that schools, classrooms programs, and appropriate transportation must be both physically and programmatically accessible to all students. It is the position of the Council, as well as the policy of the state, that all children should be treated with dignity and respect when addressing their behavioral and academic needs.

All students with disabilities, regardless of individual needs, must be provided inclusive academic and vocational instruction, evidence informed supports, access to the general curriculum, extracurricular activities and related services in the least restrictive environment. Related services refer to developmental, corrective, and other supportive services, including psychological, counseling and medical diagnostic services and transportation. The delivery of individually appropriate instruction and related services must be provided by qualified teachers and service providers with administrative support and opportunities for continued and ongoing professional development in all areas of identified need.

All people with disabilities in Texas should have the opportunity to achieve their potential for independence, productivity and integration into the community. Education is a lifelong process that is vital to attaining a full and complete life. The results of an appropriate education for students with disabilities should be evidenced by employment and/or enrollment in postsecondary education, as well as engaged community involvement, within one year of leaving high school.

Charter schools or schools accepting voucher payments must provide students the same educational rights and opportunities that they would be accorded in the public education system. The Council believes that schools that accept state or federal money to educate students must accept any student with a disability who may apply for admission to that school; abide by federal and state education laws that protect the rights of all students; abide by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act that requires any entity receiving federal funds to include people with disabilities in its program, and accept any student at the state rate of payment asking for no additional tuition or fees beyond the normal fees required by the

student's local education agency. If these criteria are not met, the Council opposes publicly funded school vouchers and charter schools. The Council does not support any initiative that would deplete funds from the public education system and ultimately from those available for the education of students with disabilities.

The full inclusion of Texas students with disabilities should be approached as a value and underlying philosophy by which we educate all students. We believe that successful inclusion requires that teacher education programs prepare all educators and administrators, not only those providing special education services, to work with the full range of students in inclusive settings. Special education is not a separate educational system, but rather a service provided to people with specific needs within the general educational system. Professional preparation programs should emphasize the shared responsibility of all educators and administrators for every student.

Full inclusion requires the ongoing, shared responsibility of students, parents, guardians, educators, administrators and the community at large to ensure that all students have the same opportunities to learn, to play, to be engaged with peers, and to fully experience student life.

Approved February 6, 2015