



FOCUS on Research

Newsletter of the Division for Research (CEC-DR)

President's Message

Urgent, Relentless, and Goal-Directed

Kristen McMaster, *University of Minnesota*

One of my favorite quotes from the special education literature is from Naomi Zigmond's article, "Special Education at a Crossroads." She wrote, "... special education is, first and foremost instruction focused on individual need. It is carefully planned. It is intensive, urgent, relentless, and goal-directed. It is empirically supported practice, drawn from research" (Zigmond, 2001, p. 45).

I use this quote to impress upon teacher candidates their responsibility to deliver high-quality, research-based instruction that leads to meaningful progress and outcomes for the students they serve. I also use it to urge doctoral students (and to motivate myself) to do research that provides teachers with the empirically-supported practices they need to foster such meaningful progress and outcomes.

I think the words "urgent, relentless, and goal-directed" can also drive our work as advocates for special education research, especially at this time of strange and often dismaying uncertainty. I often wonder, "What can I DO?" and, though a clear answer eludes me, it seems like persisting relentlessly in our work, with a sense of urgency and with a clear goal, is as good a strategy as anything.

With this approach in mind, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve a second term as CEC-DR president, and to continue with many of the initiatives we started last year, including:

- Continued efforts, in collaboration with NDD United, Friends of IES, and the CEC Interdivisional Research Group to advocate for special education research, with the goal of increasing the visibility of our work and maintaining (or increasing!) funding support.
- Creating and disseminating a series of "Research Matters" stories to highlight the ways that special education can make a difference in the lives of exceptional children and their families.
- Collaborating with the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) (led by Sarah Powell, chair of the Knowledge Utilization Committee) to produce a series of webinars to reach both research and practitioner audiences, with the goal of disseminating empirically-based practices and also attracting new members!

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- Continuing our new virtual student group as a way to share research ideas, network, and create collaboration opportunities for DR student members, with the goal of nurturing the next generation of special education scholars.
- Completing the work of the short-term work group that is creating guidance for state and local school districts in the use of Single-Case Design research to identify evidence-based practices, with the goal of ensuring that schools understand and use the best available evidence to inform their selection of interventions for children with significant academic and behavioral needs.
- Completing a special issue of *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice* on research on intensive intervention, featuring the work of DR members, in collaboration with the National Center on Leadership for Intensive Intervention, with the goal of contributing important knowledge to the field about promising ways to intensify intervention and future research directions in this area.

It is my honor to continue to do this work with all of you.

Zigmond, N. (2001). Special education at a crossroads. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 45, 70–74. ■

CEC-DR Diversity Committee Spotlight: *Effects of Multi-Tier Academic and Behavior Instruction on Difficult-to-Teach Students*

The purpose of this paper was to examine the effects of simultaneously implementing tiered academic and behavior instruction. We spotlight this article due to the implementation of a research-based intervention targeting a sample of CLD elementary students. Specifically, the researchers worked in partnership with the superintendent, senior staff, principals and campus site-based decision making team, faculty and staff to establish a prevention approach for schools enrolling large numbers of CLD students. The paper also included additional background information regarding CLD participants. Finally, at the conclusion of the project, the research team provided further professional development for staff to support continued use of intervention practices. We encourage similar research to explicitly state how its research and intervention methods are anchored in known CLD practices to support the students involved.

Algozzine, B., Wang, C., White, R., Cooke, N., Marr, M. B., Algozzine, K., & . . . Duran, G. Z. (2012). Effects of multi-tier academic and behavior instruction on difficult-to-teach students. *Exceptional Children*, 79, 45–64. ■

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Division for Research Public Policy News

“The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.”
—Franklin D. Roosevelt

More than 250 special education professionals from 40 states stormed Capitol Hill in July of 2017 as part of CEC’s annual legislative summit—this year, with a sense of urgency. We focused on protecting fundamental rights and federal funding for the children and youth whom we serve, by advocating for sustained Medicaid funding to schools; public funding for public (not private) education; and full-funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Check out the pictures on the CEC website and consider joining us next year!

<https://storify.com/CECMembership/2017-special-education-legislative-summit>

We members and leaders of CEC-DR continue to press our representatives in Congress to increase federal funding for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER). Current budgets proposed by the U.S. House and Senate include flat-funding for NCSER at \$54 million, for which we are grateful during a time of draconian cuts to other non-defense programs. However, we recognize that this amount is truly inadequate for the many unanswered questions about “what works best” for each and every child with a disability. Thus, we will continue to advocate for increases in funding to reach \$71 million.

To that end, leaders on the CEC-DR board have called on principal investigators who have received funding from NCSER in the past 10 years and are not yet members of the DR to join us at this critical time. We are grateful to each of you for your tire-

less support of our advocacy efforts. Please send me your stories of research impact (contact me if you need a model), and never relent in your advocacy.

“Democracy is hard work.”
—Barack Obama

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You can check out the latest on CEC’s NCSER advocacy here: <https://www.cec.sped.org/Policy-and-Advocacy/Current-Sped-Gifted-Issues/More-Issues/Special-Education-Research> ■

Your Research Matters

CEC-DR has launched an initiative to collect stories about how research in special education and related fields is making a difference for exceptional children, people with disabilities, and their families. We are calling this initiative **“Research Matters”** and envision a series of one or two page stories designed to be used in an array of advocacy efforts, particularly in communicating with policymakers and other stakeholders about the problems that special education researchers are addressing, especially research that is funded with federal dollars.

We encourage DR members to submit their own research ‘stories’ so that DR can share them with members and with stakeholders who want to know *how research in special education matters* and *why federal funding for research is vital*. Use the link below to view our existing stories and your own.

<http://www.cecdr.org/news/new-item4> ■

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