

## Education

### PERSONNEL PREPARATION: TEACHERS

#### Summary of the Issue:

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, students with disabilities continue to be entitled to the same rights as their non-disabled peers; a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Educational success experienced by students with disabilities is directly tied to the recruitment, continuing education, and retention of highly qualified special education personnel. Oregon, like many states, struggles to address the issues of the supply, demand, and quality of special education personnel. This includes the need to prepare special education personnel to successfully educate an increasingly diverse student population; to recruit and retain staff for the rural and frontier areas of the state; and to address the lack of physical, occupational, and speech therapists throughout the state.

#### Background:

A series of concerns face Oregon as it attempts to resolve the supply, demand, and quality of teacher education, recruitment, training, and retention;

- The number of special education teachers graduating from colleges and universities across the country has declined in recent history and the number of experienced teachers retiring is increasing.
- There is wide-spread concern about the capacities of the teacher workforce to effectively serve a growing number of students who are racially, culturally, and/or linguistically diverse.
- There is concern about the lack of adequate initial and on-going teacher training for a student population that is presenting more and more complex educational and classroom support needs.
- It has been increasingly more difficult to attract available personnel to locations where they are needed most in Oregon, including the rural and frontier areas of the state.
- Teacher turnover in special education has increased and emergency licensure of special education teachers has increased. More and more special education teachers are leaving before their fifth year.
- General education teachers frequently lack the training and support to appropriately include students with disabilities in the classroom.

**Council Position:**

- The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) believes that the preparation, recruitment, continued education, and retention of an adequate quantity and quality of teachers is a key component in the success of students with disabilities. The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities believes that special education personnel preparation and retention issues and general education training must become a major focus for state and local education agencies, professional associations, advocacy organizations, parents / families and individuals with disabilities.

**Future Activities:**

- Advocate for continued federal funding and support for projects funded to study and recommend current initiatives for improving teaching and teacher education.
- Advocate for enhanced monitoring to ensure that special and general educators all demonstrate competency in positive behavioral support, teaching literacy, and inclusive educational practices.
- Work with university partners for enhanced professional development opportunities and requirements related to instruction of children with disabilities in general education curriculum.