

2014 Resolution on Special Education Issues Awareness

WHEREAS, the Illinois PTA Legislation platform's item 3, Funding of Education, g., provides for the support of adequate appropriations for education of children within certain criteria, including those that come within the meaning of special needs; and item 6, Educational Quality Programs, a., provides for the support of legislation which would improve the quality of education; and item 7, Protection of Children and Youth, a., provides for the support of adequate legislative and financial support for the protection, health and welfare of all children and youth; and,

WHEREAS, the Illinois PTA has a continuing position which provides that we support the inclusion of Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) content, skills, evaluation and assessment standards within school curricula as has been developed by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and national research indicates that the lack of social emotional development among students with learning disabilities puts them at an increased risk for engaging in behaviors that result in heightened stress/anxiety levels, depression, and suicide;

WHEREAS, the State of Illinois has identified 287,000 (almost 5% of the 6 million school-age children receiving special education services in the United States) students with disabilities who are enrolled in a special education program and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP); and

WHEREAS, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) mandates that, in order for special education students to receive Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), instruction is to be provided by a highly qualified teacher; however, the trend in Illinois towards least restrictive environment raises concerns over the need for special education training of general classroom teachers when in 2012, "A Teacher Preparation Study" conducted in 2012 conveyed that 66% of the respondents had no previous coursework in their Teacher Preparation and College Courses in how to work with children with learning disabilities; and

WHEREAS, according to the Institute of Education Sciences, the research arm of the US Department of Education, class size reduction is one of four evidence-based reforms that have been proven to increase student achievement; yet the current towards larger class sizes in Illinois has raised concerns with respect to the adequacy of the number of trained staff available for children who are in need of a special education program; now therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Illinois PTA urge its local units and councils to seek information about special education services offered in its local school and school district, including but not limited to: placement of students; supports offered to them; the qualifications of teachers providing special education; and the status of social/emotional learning provided students receiving special education; and be it further



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RESOLVED that the Illinois PTA provide information to its local units and councils as to where they can access the requirements for special education as required by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA), Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), and Illinois rules and regulations; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Illinois PTA urge its local units and councils to promote awareness of the special education issues and the inclusion of information concerning these issues in the training of elected school board representatives in their school districts to ensure that the educational needs and the social emotional needs of these students are understood by those who will be decision makers; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Illinois PTA councils and local units share any concerns they have regarding special education services being provided in their schools and districts with the Illinois PTA and the Illinois State Board of Education; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Illinois PTA continue to work with its councils and local units in advocating for adequate statutes, rules and regulations, appropriate training for teachers, and funding to support special education for students who qualify for those services.