

Demand For Special Educators Outpaces Supply

(NAPSA)—While the demand for special education teachers continues to grow, experts claim it is becoming more difficult to recruit and retain qualified professionals. This underscores the need for increased funding for recruitment and training.

That's a key finding of a report issued by a leading special education advocacy group.

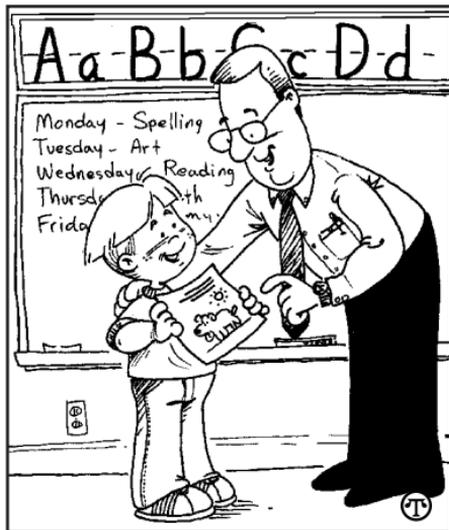
The report, *Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners*, states that over 35,000 teachers without appropriate licenses teach students with disabilities each year, in large part because funds are not available to recruit and train qualified teachers.

Each year, college and university programs in the United States prepare approximately 17,000 special education teachers—about half of the number needed annually to fill special educator vacancies.

Given that the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that by 2008 the demand for special educators will increase by one-third, the situation may get worse if appropriate action isn't taken.

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the sponsor of the report, recommends that children have access to fully qualified teachers by ensuring that:

- all special education teachers and related service providers are fully qualified and licensed under a cohesive professional licensing system across the country,



Each year, college and university programs train approximately half of the special education teachers needed.

- colleges and universities receive adequate support and funding to recruit and train qualified personnel, and state and local school districts have the resources they need to recruit and support qualified teachers and related service providers,

- special education teaching and learning conditions are improved, and

- schools support using high-quality, research-validated instruction.

CEC works to promote appropriate professional standards for special educators. To learn more about the CEC and ways to support its goals, visit www.cec.sped.org.