

Education NEWS & NOTES

Making Time For Special Education

(NAPSA)—Most special education teachers' biggest desire is to teach, but some say they can't. The volumes of paperwork special education teachers must complete is keeping many from teaching their students and planning effective, appropriate lessons, according to a study by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

The study revealed that more than 60 percent of special education teachers spend half a day to one and a half days a week completing paperwork. In addition, President Bush's Commission on Excellence in special education found that "special educators spend more time on paperwork than grading papers, communicating with parents, sharing expertise with colleagues, supervising teacher aides and attending meetings with parents combined."

Why? Under federal law, special education teachers are required to complete an annual Individualized Educational Program (IEP) for each child with a disability. The average length of a typical IEP is between eight and 16 pages. In addition, special education teachers must complete other paperwork tasks—such as documentation that parents of children with disabilities have been informed of their rights, keeping phone logs, progress reports, discipline forms, and medical assistance billing records. They also must write letters and



A Bright Idea—New laws may give special education teachers more time to teach their students.

parent notifications, and complete central office and other state, district, and school accountability forms.

CEC has called on Congress to reduce special education paperwork through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the law that governs special education.

The group recommends streamlining IEPs—so they only document information that is necessary to ensure students learn—and eliminating repetitive documentation. CEC also recommends funds be made available for schools to hire clerical support for special education teachers and that technology be made available to help manage the paperwork burden.

For more information, contact CEC at www.cec.sped.org or 1-888-CEC-SPED.