



# IDAHO Council for Exceptional Children

Winter Newsletter  
February 2007

## CEC Calls for Reform of the *No Child Left Behind Act* on Its Fifth Anniversary—ARLINGTON, VA, JANUARY 11, 2007

While the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) supports the principles of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, it believes Congress must reexamine the legislation to address its shortcomings.

Now, at *NCLB's* fifth anniversary, significant strides have been made in the education of students with disabilities, such as higher standards and accountability for these students' academic success, but many areas need improvement. These areas include: funding to implement the law, highly qualified teacher requirements, assessments for children with disabilities, the current system of sanctions for schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements, and more focused attention on children who are gifted and talented.

"*NCLB* states a noble ambition: to ensure all children—including those with disabilities and those from diverse cultures—meet high academic standards," says CEC's Associate Executive Director for Public Policy Deb Ziegler. "However, through our work with special educators across the nation, as well as parents of children with exceptionalities, CEC recognizes that as the law is currently written, its goals are difficult to achieve. CEC will work with Congress and the administration to make the necessary changes and ensure *NCLB* retains its overarching aim while rectifying its problems."

For *NCLB* to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities, CEC has identified the following areas, among others, for improvement:

A process must be developed to enable middle and high school special education teachers who teach multiple core subjects to demonstrate that they meet highly qualified requirements via a variety of methods.

Student assessment must be changed to more fairly and accurately measure student progress. States must be allowed to measure students' growth in achievement as well as their perform-

ance in relation to pre-determined levels of academic proficiency. Also, multiple indicators of student achievement, in addition to standardized tests, should be used to determine student and school performance.

School improvement plans should be allowed sufficient time to make a difference in student achievement before sanctions are applied. Further, sanctions should not be applied if they undermine existing effective reform efforts.

*NCLB* must recognize and address the unique learning needs of students with gifts and talents to allow these students to realize their potential.

*NCLB* funding must be increased. Funding must cover a substantial percentage of the cost states and districts will incur to carry out the law. Fully funding *NCLB* must not reduce expenditures for other education programs. CEC will release its formal specific recommendations on *NCLB* in the near future.

Additionally, CEC is a founding member of the Forum on Educational Accountability, a diverse group of organizations, including educational, disability, civil rights, and religious, that have joined together to address the reform of *NCLB* and issue recommendations.

## DCDT Division of Career Development and Transition



Division of Career  
Development and  
Transition

### *DCDT Update January 2007*

DCDT Members met at the annual meeting in Sun Valley at the CEC conference in October. There were over 30 members and guests present for the meeting. During the meeting Andy Covington was elected as president-elect, Trisha Miles as the new treasurer, and Susan Puga was re-elected as secretary.

Lisa Perry was set to begin her term as DCDT President in January, but has taken an emergency leave due to a family tragedy. She will continue to consult with the board, but not take an active role at this time. We send her and her family our best wishes and will miss her wonderful energy at the meetings. Karen Gillette will stay on as president at this time and until further notice.

The DCDT members are supporting the **Tools for Life Conference in March** by gathering items and certificates from local businesses as “give-aways” for conference participants. This conference was a huge success last year and we look forward to participation again this year.

**DCDT MEMBERS** - We will be participating in several fundraisers to assist the board and a member to attend the DCDT conference in Orlando, Florida in October.

If anyone knows of any **vendors** that would be interested in attending and participating in the **CEC conference in Sun Valley**, have them contact Andy Covington at: [acovington@sd271.k12.id.us](mailto:acovington@sd271.k12.id.us).

### Current DCDT Officers

President: Lisa Perry  
lperry@nsd131.org  
President-Elect: Andy Covington  
acovington@sd271.k12.id.us  
Past-President: Karen Gillette  
GilletteKaren@msn.com  
Secretary: Susan Puga  
spuga@nsd131.org  
Treasurer: Trisha Miles

## Tools for Life 2007 Secondary Transition & Technology Fair



DoubleTree Riverside Hotel – Boise, Idaho  
2900 Chinden Blvd.

March 5 & 6, 2007

Sponsored by:

The Idaho State Department of Education, the Idaho Assistive Technology Project, the Center on Disabilities and Human Development, the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Idaho Interagency Council on Secondary Transition

## Questions about Tools For Life?

Call 1-800-432-8324,

visit [www.idahoat.org](http://www.idahoat.org),

or email staff below:

**General Fair Questions**—email Sue House

sueh@uidaho.edu

**Registration**—email Kristen Hagen

kristenh@uidaho.edu

## ITAG Idaho the Association for the Gifted

The Association for the Gifted (TAG) delivers information to both professionals and parents about gifted and talented children and their needs.

### ITAG 2006 Summary of Activities by Marcia Wall

Idaho the Association for the Gifted has had an active year working for gifted and talented children.

ITAG sponsored the week long Edufest Conference at BSU in July, serving as hosts for the Parent Institute and School Counselor/Psychologist Day during the conference. Gifted resource books were given away at the special one-day sessions.

ITAG also distributed welcome goody bags to all conference residents in the dorms as well as sponsor a hospitality table during the week of the conference. This was the first year of Kidfest. A one day camp held at BSU during the parent Institute for gifted kids whose parents were at the institute. ITAG donated \$1000 to help sponsor the first year of this great activity.

ITAG joined NAGC and other affiliates and donated \$250 to sponsor a Nicholas Green Distinguished Student Award. Ten \$200 mini-grants were offered to teachers who had creative and innova-

tive ideas for project involving gifted students in their classrooms. \$100 Regional Meeting assistance was offered each region to support regional collaboration.

The ITAG website has been rejuvenated with the acquiring of a new webmaster. The ITAG member list serve has been activated once again.

Members are now automatically enrolled when they join ITAG.

Superior newsletters were published with an extended distribution list throughout the state to those who might benefit from updated news and activities concerning gifted kids.

Karen Grindle received the Idaho Gifted Education Milestone Award

(GEM) from the ITAG organization for 2006. Karen retires from the ITAG board after serving six years as its treasurer.

ITAG sponsored the TAG portion of the 2006 Idaho CEC Conference with integrating the arts into the curriculum as its focus, highlighting the conference with presenters Joan Franklin Smutny

in creative writing and poetry, Jim Valley in music and movement, and Diane Garmire in the visual arts.

New regional representatives have been added and are an active, integral part of the organization. Go to the ITAG website to contact your regions rep, or the webmaster to join the ITAG list serve at

[itag-sage.org](http://itag-sage.org)

ITAG/SAGE Officers  
 President Linda Stokes  
[dale\\_stokes@yahoo.com](mailto:dale_stokes@yahoo.com)  
 Past President Marcia Wall  
[mrwall2@hotmail.com](mailto:mrwall2@hotmail.com)  
 President Elect Marti Pike  
[pikema@tfsd.k12.id.us](mailto:pikema@tfsd.k12.id.us)  
 Vice President Susan Wolfe  
[Susan.wolfe@boiseschools.org](mailto:Susan.wolfe@boiseschools.org)  
 Secretary Linda Hawley  
[lindahawley@hotmail.com](mailto:lindahawley@hotmail.com)

*New Resource  
 available on  
 differentiated  
 instruction  
[Fair Isn't Always  
 Equal](#), by Rick  
 Wormeli*

## DEC Division of Early Childhood

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) is an organization designed for individuals who work with or on behalf of children with special needs, birth through age 8, and their families.

DEC President  
 Remae Murdock  
[murdrema@d91.k12.id.us](mailto:murdrema@d91.k12.id.us)

There are great resources and information on the National CEC DEC website.  
<http://www.dec-sped.org/>  
 Along with links to the following new documents.

**The Center for Evidence-Based Practice** has created three new handouts that provide professionals and family members evidence-based recommendations on a variety of topics.

Supporting Infants and Toddlers with Challenging Behavior

Linking Social Development and School Readiness to Behavior

Program Practices for Promoting the Social Development of

Young Children and Addressing Challenging Behavior

These handouts can be viewed and downloaded at the CEBP website.



## CCBD Council for Children with Behavior Disorders

The Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) promotes the education and welfare of children and youth with behavioral and emotional disorders.

### 2007 CCBD Officers

President Jennifer Haemker

[jhaemker@nsd131.org](mailto:jhaemker@nsd131.org)

Past President Charlie Silva

[charliesilva@boiseschools.org](mailto:charliesilva@boiseschools.org)

Vice President Evelyn Sartin

[evelyn.vanderlinden@boiseschools.org](mailto:evelyn.vanderlinden@boiseschools.org)

Secretary Marlene Waters-Haub

The Idaho Council for Children with Behavior Disorders

Presents:

Dr. Richard Pines, Board Certified Child Psychiatrist

*Childhood Psychiatric Disorders, Treatment Options and  
Strategies for Bridging  
the Medical and Educational Arenas*

1 day Workshop (8:30-3:30 Lunch included)

Friday March 9 2007

Nampa Civic Center



## CAN Children and Youth Action Network

CEC's Children and Youth Action Network (CAN) is an organized group of volunteers who are dedicated to helping advance policy affecting students with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. CAN seeks to (1) effect the necessary governmental changes at the local, state and federal levels which will make possible the implementation of CEC policies relating to the education of exceptional children; and (2) to further vitalize CEC units by providing meaningful vehicles for membership and CEC public visibility.

### Legislative Action Center:

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/PolicyAdvocacy/LegislativeActionCenter/default.htm>

Margaret Gross, Idaho CAN Coordinator, January 2007

This is a critical time for action at both the state and federal levels. At the state level we have a new Superintendent of Education, Tom Luna, and proposals from the State Board of Education. At the national level we have a new democratically controlled congress, new IDEA authorizations, and the fifth anniversary of NCLB.

Our state legislators need to hear from you concerning the educational issues in Idaho. As a member of CEC, you can let them know that our mission is to improve educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities. Some of the issues that need to be addressed are:

- **Public School Funding**—The expansion of public school programs has a financial impact on the operation of Idaho's public school system. The unequal or absence of funding of new or expanded programs dilutes the available resources for all students. No program should be introduced or expanded without the associated full funding. The implementation of the proposed high school redesign requires full funding including support for students with disabilities.

- **Tax Credits and Vouchers**—The welfare of this nation is dependent on a strong system of public school education. Both tax credits and vouchers adversely affect financial support for education.

- **Early Childhood Education**—We need to encourage careful consideration of the educational advantages of quality childhood experiences. Research in the area of early childhood education supports the need to establish such programs and to focus on the identification of at risk students. The expectations of NCLB and Idaho's accountability mandates necessitate a change in our current laws. Full funding to implement these changes must accompany the change in statute.

- **Mandatory Kindergarten**—Idaho CEC supports mandatory kindergarten for all children in public schools, and private schools. Thorough consideration should be given to the educational advantages of full-day kindergarten offerings to meet expectations of NCLB and Idaho's accountability mandates. Full funding to implement these changes must accompany the change in statute.

- **Recruitment and Retention of Special Education Teachers**—There has been a shortage of qualified special education teachers

## Idaho Legislation and Advocacy

ers for more than a decade. With the lack of federal funding for IDEA and the pressure of meeting the NCLB mandates, special educators are experiencing increasing workloads and decreasing support. As a result, special educators are leaving the field to return to general education or to seek other occupations and college students are choosing other careers. We need increased funding and support to attract and retain qualified professionals to meet the diverse educational needs of individuals with exceptionalities.

**Contact your legislators now. Use email, the telephone and letters to advocate for quality educational opportunities for exceptional children. Remember always:**

**You are the expert on what your school and your students need, and you CAN make a difference!!**



## CASE Council of Administrators of Special Education

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) promotes professional leadership and provides special education administrators with opportunities for personal and professional advancement.

Alyssa Carter, CASE President, brought back great information from the National CASE Board of Directors meeting that echoes many of our state issues.

Among items discussed at the national meeting were issues about membership Recruitment and retention, developing a position statement for private

school services, and "leading questions" on the National parent survey.

Highlights of the conference included RTI implementation and models, collaboration for RTI, and Positive Behavior Supports.

Locally, the CASE division has proposed changing its bylaws to have an elected president just for CASE.

That person will commit to a year as president elect and two years as president. The president elect year will help to transition leadership within both organizations. The IASEA will vote on the bylaw change

and if approved, elect the CASE president at the May Special Education Director's meeting in Boise. This year's CASE president nominee would come from Region III.

Other items to note include the legislative session and topics such as ISDB, Medicaid, and Early Childhood.

**Don't forget the Annual IASEA Spring Conference in May and IASA Leadership Summit in June!**

## National CEC Conference



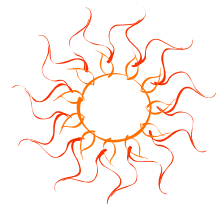
### Idaho CEC Sun Valley

The Idaho Unit of Council for Exceptional Children invites all interested persons to attend our conference in Sun Valley on October 4th and 5th, 2007. This year's conference theme "**Success for All Students Begins with Positive Motivation**" was chosen to encourage an array of presentations that will support all educators to serve students throughout the tiers.

Registration forms will be available on our website. Pre-registration deadline is September 17, 2007. Conference lodging rates are available by contacting Sun Valley Reservations at 800-786-8259.

For more information about the conference you may contact Michelle Doty by email at [mddoty@lsc.edu](mailto:mddoty@lsc.edu).

We hope to see you there!



### National CEC Louisville KY 2007

April 18-21, 2007

**CEC Annual Convention &  
Expo.  
Louisville, Kentucky**



## Officers for

Elections were held in November for Vice President, Treasurer, and a Representative. We would like to welcome the new and returning officers to the Board.

**President,** Russell Kirsch  
**Past President,** Sherrie Bosserman  
**President Elect,** Michelle Doty  
**Vice President,** Karen Gillette  
**Secretary,** Rene Rohrer  
**Treasurer,** Peggy Clanton  
**Representatives,**  
Clara Ann Allred  
Barbara Huck



## COMEDY NIGHT AT BSU

**March 6th, 2007** Sponsored by BSU Student CEC Chapter

The Boise State CEC Student Chapter will be hosting a Comedy Fundraiser at the Student Union Building (SUB) in the Jordan Ballroom D on **Tuesday, March 6th 2007**. **Four comedians will begin their performances at 7:30pm. Doors will open at 7:00pm.** Water, soda, and snack food will be provided by the BSU CEC. The cost to you will be a \$10 donation per person at the door beginning at 7:00pm. Tickets will be sold in advance and at the door. A silent auction will be held throughout the event. Comedians include Pat Mac, Sherri Japhet, Don Ritchie, Trevor Hattabaugh, and the Foul Puppets Improv. Group.

Proceeds from this event will help the Boise State Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children attend annual professional development conferences, volunteer opportunities such as the Special Olympics and state conferences. These opportunities help future teachers gain more experience and knowledge in their field, so that they are better prepared to become quality educators for all of Idaho's children.

For more information contact:

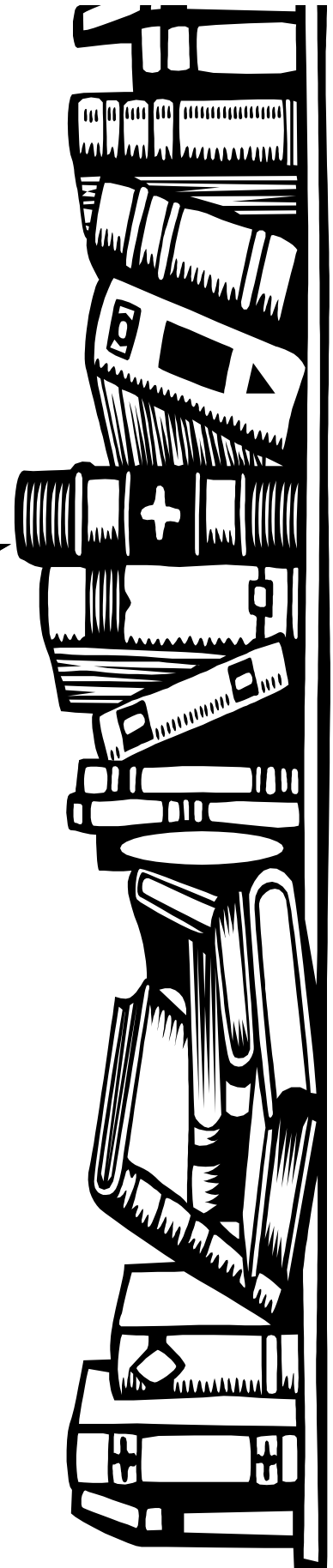
Bryon Cox at [coxbyron@cablone.net](mailto:coxbyron@cablone.net)  
or Debbie Dorsey at  
[whirlwind67@hotmail.com](mailto:whirlwind67@hotmail.com)

## Yes I Can! Awards—Nomination Form Available On-line

The Yes I Can! Awards Program was established at the international level to celebrate the achievements of children and youth with disabilities, to encourage children and youth with disabilities to seek their highest potential; and to increase public awareness of the abilities, aspirations, and personal qualities of people with disabilities.

The Idaho Unit would like to reinstate the Yes I Can! Awards in Idaho for the 2007-2008 year. Nominees for the Yes I Can!

Nomination forms will be available on the CEC Idaho website and nomination applications are due by June 20th, 2007. Please visit the Idaho CEC website for more information or contact Rene Rohrer at [lrrohrer@sde.idaho.gov](mailto:lrrohrer@sde.idaho.gov).



 <b>Council for Exceptional Children</b>	2007 Idaho Unit <b>CEC CONFERENCE</b> October 4th and 5th, 2007 Sun Valley Idaho	<b>“Success For All Students Begins With Positive Motivation”</b>
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## *2007 Conference Presentations Application*

**Session Information**
**Application Deadline:** April 25, 2007

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenters: \_\_\_\_\_

 Sessions:     1 hour and 15 minutes     Showcase Poster

Please type a description of your presentation or poster session in 40 words or less. This description will appear in the conference program, if accepted.

**Audience:** The presentation will fit best in which of the following strands?

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> CCBD | <input type="checkbox"/> AT               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CASE | <input type="checkbox"/> Paraprofessional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DEC  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-service      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DCDT | <input type="checkbox"/> Other            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ITAG |   |

**Equipment Needs:** Indicate only what will be needed from the conference location. If possible please provide your own laptop and projector.

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overhead projector | <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop            | <input type="checkbox"/> Projector/Screen       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Podium             | <input type="checkbox"/> Flip Chart/ Stand | <input type="checkbox"/> Extension Cord         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Microphone         | <input type="checkbox"/> TV/VCR            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, Please specify: |

**Session Coordinator Contact Information (1 person only)**

Name: _____	Organization: _____	
Address: _____	Daytime phone: _____	Home Phone: _____
City: _____	FAX: _____	
State: _____	Zip Code: _____	EMAIL: _____

**Please send completed applications and typed session description. The complete application must be sent to Michelle Doty by April 25, 2007.**

Michelle Doty  
 3118 Park Road  
 Deary, ID 83823  
 Email: mddoty@lsc.edu  
 Fax: 208-792-2820

# Success for All Students Begins with Positive Motivation

October 4th and 5th 2007

CEC Conference in Sun Valley Idaho

The Idaho Unit of Council for Exceptional Children invites all interested person to submit proposals for the 2007 conference in Sun Valley Idaho. This year's conference theme "Success for All Students Begins with Positive Motivation" was chosen to encourage an array of presentations that will support all educators to serve student throughout the tiers. Suggested topics include but are not limited to; supporting learners with Autism, Positive Behavior Supports, Response to Intervention, data based decision making, access to math and science curriculum, gifted education, assistive technology, and providing support to paraprofessionals and pre-service educators.

It is the responsibility of the presenter to develop a presentation that relates to the conference theme. Topics need to address how to connect with students and how to remain focused on their educational and personal achievements. Tell us your secrets to success.

Program selection will be guided by the following criteria: a) quality of the proposal; b) overall objective of the presentation; c) importance and timeliness of the topic to the field; d) practical applicability; and e) how the presentation addresses issues related to exceptionality.

## *Directions for Completing the Conference Presentation Application*

### **I. Session Information**

- You may select to do a 1 hour and 15 minute presentation or a poster session. The poster session will be held on Thursday, October 4th from 5:30-6:30 pm.
- If you are doing a presentation—on a separate piece of paper, please type a description of your presentation in 40 words or less. Your description should include: the presenters' names, the overall objective of the presentation, the intended audience (classroom teacher, parent, etc), type of session ( lecture, hands-on, etc.), and a brief description about the session topic. This description will appear in the conference program.
- If you are doing a poster session—on a separate piece of paper, please type a description to the program to be showcased during the poster session. Your description should include the presenters' names, area addressed in your program, program goals, students' ages, and program outcomes.
- Check the strand that is most appropriate for your presentation.. Indicate specific equipment needs. Please provide your own laptop/projector if your presentation requires one.

### **II. Session Coordinator**

- If your presentation involves multiple presenters, list each presenter and designate one person to be the session coordinator to serve as the contact person.
- Provide contact information (address, phone, email) where the session coordinator can be reached over the summer to contact and provide notification of acceptance status.

### **III. General Information**

- All presenters will need to register for the conference and pay registration fees.
- Be prepared to bring your own handouts.
- If possible, please provide your own laptop and projector if applicable.
- Lodging reservations can be made in advance by calling Sun Valley Reservations at 800-786-8259.

### **IV. Application Deadline: April 25, 2007**

- Send completed application and typed program or poster session description to:

<p>Michelle Doty 3118 Park Road Deary, ID 83823 Email: mddoty@lcsc.edu Fax: 208-792-2820</p>
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## 2007 Idaho CEC State Conference Registration Form

Rates increase after September 15, 2007.

**ON-STIE REGISTRATION: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3th, 5:00 – 9:00 PM AND THURSDAY, 7:00 – 8:30 AM.**

	Conference w/ Thursday night banquet and Friday luncheon		Conference Without meals		One Day Registration Thursday or Friday		Division Luncheons CCBD, DEC, ITAG, DCDT, or CASE on Thursday	Workshops Wed. CCBD or DCDT <u>Sat.</u> -JTAG or DEC	
	Preregister	After 9/17	Preregister	After 9/17	Without meals	TH banquet F luncheon		Preregister	After 9/17
<b>CEC Member</b>	150	180	125	155	100	120 / 110	Division members = free	40	45
<b>Nonmember</b>	180	210	155	185	120	140 / 130	Non Division members 30	55	60
<b>Student</b>	70	80	45	55			Non Division members 25		

*Consider joining CEC and the Division(s) of your choice now to receive the reduced conference rates.  
Phone 888/232-7733 or connect to <http://www.cec.sped.org>*

**PRE REGISTRATION POSTMARK DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 17, 2007**

**Cancellation** requests must be postmarked by September 27, 2007. No refunds after this date.

\*\*\*\*\*

CEC ID number (if member) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 First name Last name

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Position and School District or Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
 City State Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Area Code/Daytime Phone # FAX number

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address

For accessibility accommodations contact Karen Gillette at [gillettekaren@msn.com](mailto:gillettekaren@msn.com)  
 Check if you belong to:  
 CASE  CCBD  DEC  ITAG  DCDT  Student

Please check all that apply:  
 General education teacher  Administrator  
 Special education teacher  Speech/Lang  
 Paraeducator  Parent  University  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate your choices and enter the amount from the chart above.**

**Conference** 1. \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 with meals  
 without meals

**One Day Registration** 2. \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Thursday  
 Friday  
 with Meals

**Division Luncheon (Thursday)** 3. \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 CCBD  
 DEC  
 ITAG  
 DCDT  
 CASE  
 (Additional \$25 for non CEC division members)

**Conference Workshop** 4. \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 CCBD Preconference  
 DEC Postconference  
 DCDT Preconference  
 ITAG Postconference

**Total** 5. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Payment** Payable to **Idaho CEC**  
 Check # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Purchase Order # \_\_\_\_\_

Purchase order or payment must accompany the registration form. Thank you.

**Send the registration form and payment to:**  
 Vicki Kulm  
 PO Drawer T Filer, ID 83328  
[kulmvi@filertel.com](mailto:kulmvi@filertel.com) (208) 326-5988

Need more info? Contact Michelle Doty by email at [mddoty@lsc.edu](mailto:mddoty@lsc.edu) Fax: 208-792-2820  
**Conference lodging rates are available. Contact Sun Valley Reservations at 800-786-8259**

# A Resiliency-Based School Vaccinates Students Against Failure

by Carolyn Cosmos

Taken from

<http://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=...&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=7914> (1 of 2)2/23/2007 11:37:52 AM

I grew up in a difficult family situation, but I had good teachers who made the difference for me," says Shannon Lea Espinoza as she explains why she went into teaching and why she obtained a Master's degree in working with kids who are at risk. Espinoza started an innovative alternative program for these children near Spokane, Wash., and she was recently given one of Disney's special education American Teacher Awards. Her winning "Crescent Core Alternative Middle School" in Cheney, a rural area, is located off campus in an older administration building, Espinoza explains. Separated from the other Crescent Core classrooms, it allows her 24 students a "fresh start." Hardwood floors and an odd warren of two rooms and an attached gym welcome you as you walk in. In one of the rooms there's a kitchen space, and you might find students sitting at classroom tables. The other resembles a comfortable living room with couches and built-in bookshelves. On some days, with the "kids spread out" you might wonder where they all are and be hard pressed to identify their tiny teacher when you do find them. On other days you might encounter "a three-ring circus" Espinoza says, laughing. It might include her five assistants and co-workers. You could encounter social-work interns or college volunteers, perhaps a therapist. The students are diverse. Says Suzanne Calbick, a paraprofessional there, they could include bright students who don't fit into any mold, students who lack maturity or social skills, children having problems at home, truants, and potential drop-outs. Says one student's grandmother, "She has taken our grandson and transformed him from a child who hated school, failed a grade, and defied you to make him attend to a young adult with perfect attendance." How did this happen? Crescent Core Alternative is "a resiliency-based school" Calbick explains. Espinoza researched resiliency and identified factors that help stressed and challenged children do well in spite of the difficulties they may face inside their brains and bodies and maybe their own homes. She's plugged this into her own growing up, the way school became a safe haven and a second family for her and then designed an environment that allows challenged children to thrive. She calls the key elements of her program "antibodies to risk factors." The cornerstone is to create a community or family spirit so students feel "very connected" to each other, to the staff, and to the school, she says. To foster this sense of belonging, students do initial self inventories and share them, including a True Colors personality survey and a multiple intelligences inventory. They identify strengths and develop ways to talk about themselves. Students "mentor each other and teach each other," she says, in a "one-room-schoolhouse" fashion and take these techniques back into their families. In addition, "every aspect of our curriculum is designed by the students. I then match the topics and activities they choose with our state standards and learning benchmarks." Espinoza thinks every adult in a school setting can contribute to this bonding, including janitorial staff. Of "lunch ladies" she says, "How powerful they are!" when it comes to connecting kids to each other and to a school. Next, creating "clear concise boundaries for student behavior" is vital, a foundation, she says. But to build upward from there, it's important to have high expectations. Many children who are not doing well in a standard setting and are academically behind are brilliantly creative thinkers, she observes. To reach them, Espinoza might "start with algebra and then go back and teach them their multiplication tables." Collaboration with a university takes the middle-schoolers to a college campus and provides interactions with faculty and college students. Dealing with students who are at risk in a positive way that reaffirms their own goals and aspirations is also important, Espinoza emphasizes, as is giving students many ways to experience themselves as competent and responsible persons. Her students have jobs to do, some daily, and may even come to school for one reason: to make sure that "their" job gets done. The final factor is humor. Allowing it, encouraging it, and working with it helps troubled children. "It's a huge protective factor," Espinoza says. Classroom approaches that work well with this population include service learning, she says, and her students not only participate in community projects, they have become leaders. In one undertaking they are paired with preschool children and read books aloud to them several times a week. The middle schoolers, who may be poor readers, do the planning and assume adult roles. In the wake of the September 11th attack, Espinoza's 24 students raised more money than the 900 others in the rest of the school and donated the money to the Red Cross. Similarly, when an earthquake hit Washington state last year, Espinoza's group "made Rice Krispy Treats for weeks on end" so they could sell them and contribute to a relief fund. Project oriented and multi-subject "integrated learning" also works well, she explains. A project on natural disasters included math studies in statistics, graph creation, weather and climate studies, and writing projects. Teaching students "who are seen as disengaged, disruptive, and unteachable is the driving factor in my life," Espinoza says. "I believe all students can succeed and that 'at-risk' students are really students 'at promise.'" *Espinoza is a member of CEC Chapter #97.*



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