



For Immediate Release

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## Kentucky Student Honored with International Award

**Arlington, Va., February 27, 2023** – Duane O’Neill, of Harwood, ND, received the 2023 Yes I Can Award for Academics from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Duane will be honored this March along with other Yes I Can recipients at the CEC Convention and Expo in Louisville, KY.

The Yes I Can Awards celebrate the achievements of children and youth with exceptionalities, encouraging these individuals to seek their highest potential and increase public awareness of the abilities, aspirations, and personal qualities of those with disabilities.

When Duane entered elementary school as a kindergartner, he was overwhelmed by the classroom environment and unable to participate in for several months. But Duane had goals, and worked with his teachers and faculty to find routines and communication styles that suited him. Thanks to this steadfast dedication, as a fourth grader he now spends most of his day in the classroom with his peers. Duane enjoys lunch time in the cafeteria, willingly engaging with his fellow students. He not only participates in group work but can be found participating in spontaneous communication with his peers and staff members.

His teacher says “Duane thrives on the school routine. He loves coming to school and is a light in the building. He brings smiles to his peers and to the staff in the building. Duane has made a positive impact on his peers by showing that having a disability does not deter a person from participating fully with their class.”



The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international professional organization dedicated to high-quality education that is inclusive and equitable for individuals with disabilities. Learn more about CEC at <https://exceptionalchildren.org/>.

Thank you to [Pearson](#) for their continued support of the Yes I Can Awards!