

CEC Professional Standards: 1980 Through 2020

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Abstract

In 1922, CEC recognized the crucial role of standards in defining and promoting special education as a profession. This paper documents the initiatives of the CEC Professional Standards and Practice Committee during the period from 1980 through 2020. Over this period, special educators, like their general education colleagues, continued striving to become a fully recognized profession. These years were not without significant challenges to the field of special education, and CEC responded to these challenges by developing, revising, and improving the CEC Professional Standards, and then using these standards to collaborate with national partners in moving the profession forward. This history reviews the development and impact of the CEC Professional Preparation Standards and highlights several related initiatives.

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Prologue

From its formation in 1922 CEC recognized the crucial role of standards in defining and promoting special education as a profession. At its inaugural meeting, the founders of CEC identified the establishment of professional standards as a primary aim of the organization. Then in 1965, CEC held a conference to highlight professional standards, and in 1981 the CEC Delegate Assembly charged CEC to develop, promote, and implement preparation and credentialing standards along with a professional code of ethics. CEC has embraced this responsibility and has continued to be a leader among education associations in the development of preparation standards for special education professionals at all levels.

The CEC Constitution gives the Professional Standards and Practice Committee (PSPC) the responsibility for “developing, implementing, and promoting CEC Standards”. Special educators, like their general education colleagues, are still striving to become a fully recognized profession. Previous articles (Heller, 1983, Heller and Ridenhour, 1983, Connor, 1997)) have elaborated CEC’s work in developing and promoting standards prior to 1983. This paper focuses on the initiatives of the PSPC from 1980 through 2020 related to the CEC Professional Standards, including the CEC Professional Preparation Standards, as well as CEC Ethics and Professional Practice Standards. These years were not without significant challenges to the field of special education, including: a chronic and severe shortage of well-prepared personnel to deliver special education services (Boe, Cook & Sunderland, 2008), the unequal distribution of well-prepared special education personnel (Imazeki & Goe, 2009), and working conditions that exacerbated the retention of well-prepared special education personnel (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005, Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008, Kozleski, et al, 2000, Gersten et al, 2001, Billingsley, 2003, & Billingsley, 2005) and policies that were perceived as blaming teachers (Kumashiro, 2012). For any struggling profession, problems with recruitment, preparation, working conditions, distribution, and retention are substantial impediments that can significantly obstruct a profession’s ability to improve preparation and increase the rigor of standards.

Despite these challenges, CEC made active progress toward shaping special education as a mature recognized profession. It was a dynamic period for educator professionalization in general and within special education in particular. CEC responded to these challenges by developing, revising, and improving the CEC Professional Standards, and then used these standards to collaborate with national partners. This history first reviews the CEC Professional Preparation Standards and then highlights several related initiatives.

Professional Standards: Moving Special Education Forward

Established professions are based on specialized knowledge and skills that are needed to practice the profession safely and effectively. It is, therefore, logical that the original CEC Professional Preparation Standards were validated sets of knowledge and skills (Specialty Sets) that delineated the essential knowledge and skills that beginning special education professionals must possess to begin professional practice safely and effectively.

In 1983, the Delegate Assembly charged CEC with the development of a set of professional preparation standards. In 1989, the CEC Board of Directors approved a framework for the

PSPC to develop the knowledge and skills sets for entry-level practice. To involve the expertise of the various CEC Divisions directly, the PSPC established the Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee (KSSC) with representatives from each of the CEC Divisions and past CEC Teachers of the Year. The charge included identifying a common core of knowledge and skills for all beginning special education teachers and development of Specialty Sets of knowledge and skills that were essential to teach in each the various exceptionality areas and developmental age ranges.

The KSSC began with a survey of materials specific to the proposed CEC Preparation Standards including the professional literature and the research; state, provincial, and other governmental publications; and materials submitted to them from institutions of higher education. The KSSC identified and organized thousands of competencies and then distilled them into 195 knowledge and skills organized into 8 categories that were then validated through a process of survey and expert judgment. CEC adopted 107 validated common core knowledge and skills in 1992. The CEC Common Core of Knowledge and Skills Essential for All Beginning Special Education Teachers was published in 1992 (Swan and Sirvis, 1992).

Under the direction of the PSPC in 1993, the KSSC began the process of validating the specialized knowledge and skills sets in the respective exceptionality/age groups. In 1995 CEC published the 1st edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know: The International Standards for the Preparation and Certification of Special Education Teachers* (CEC, 1995), informally known as the "Red Book". This 1st edition included the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skill Set and 8 Knowledge and Skill Specialty Sets for specific exceptionality/age groups (e.g., Early Childhood, Learning Disabilities, Visual Impairments, Gifted).

Over the years, CEC developed 10 Initial Specialty Sets and 12 Advanced Specialty Sets that reflected various exceptionality areas/age groups, different credentialing structures, and advanced roles available in special education. Programs preparing entry-level candidates to the field of special education use the Initial Standards while programs preparing credentialed special educators preparing for advanced special education roles use the Advanced Standards.

In 2000, CEC developed a uniform set of initial preparation program standards based on and informed by the Specialty Sets. Preparation programs continued using the Specialty Sets to guide their program development, curriculum improvement, and individual professionals to guide their individualized professional development plans.

By 2003, CEC had developed and was using their rigorous consensual validation process to identify, update, and maintain the Specialty Sets. This process is described in detail in the *Validation Studies Resource Manual* (CEC, 2010). As a part of this validation process, a sponsoring division proposes knowledge and skills essential for initial practice in the respective area of specialization and then documents and classifies the literature upon which the Specialty Set knowledge and skill are based including empirical research, disciplined inquiry, informed theory, and the wisdom of professional practice. Stakeholders are surveyed to ensure that the items are sufficiently rigorous and are essential for beginning professional special educators. This process has involved many thousands of practicing special educators (e.g., teachers,

administrators, and teacher educators) in consonance with the KSSC that included representatives from CEC Divisions.

Partners

As a voluntary professional association, CEC did not possess the leverage to enforce its policies. This made it essential for CEC to work as a collegial partner with relevant agencies to enhance the effectiveness of its standards and policies. In its efforts toward professionalizing special education, CEC partnered with many agencies focusing on initial and advanced credentialing of individuals, on accrediting and approving preparation programs, and on other related issues. A brief review of some of the more significant of these partner agencies here provides context for the reader throughout this paper.

Council of Chief State School Officers

One agency with which CEC collaborated is the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). In 1987, CCSSO established the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, later changed to InTASC) as a consortium of state education agencies and professional educational organizations committed to the reform of the preparation, credentialing, and on-going professional development of teachers. The mission of InTASC was to support credentialing bodies in the United States in the development of compatible educational policy for teaching, new accountability policy for teacher preparation programs, new approaches to assess the performance of teachers for credentialing and evaluation, and new programs to enhance the professional development of teachers. CEC members and staff were actively involved in the development and implementation of each iteration of the InTASC Standards related to special education. In 2000, CEC directly aligned its Initial Preparation Standards with the InTASC standards to provide clarity to state credentialing agencies and supported the work of teacher preparation programs.

National Commission on Teaching & America's Future

Just nine years after CCSSO launched InTASC, the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) published the landmark national report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (1996). After two years of extensive study, the Commission concluded that the single most important strategy for achieving America's education goals was to recruit, prepare, and support excellent teachers for every school. The recommendations in the report received intense interest across the educational community. The commission urged action in five key areas: setting high standards for teaching; reinventing preparation programs and professional development; overhauling recruitment; developing pay policies to reward teachers' knowledge and skill; and creating schools that are structured so students and teachers can succeed. As in other professions, the Commission's report made clear that accreditation, credentialing, and advanced professional certification should make up a "three-legged stool" upon which teacher quality is supported. Among its recommendations, the report urged states to set rigorous requirements for teaching through the creation of professional standards boards; to close inadequate education schools and insist that others earn national accreditation; and to credential teachers based on demonstrated knowledge and skill performance rather than accumulated coursework. CEC took these recommendations to heart

and worked diligently in accreditation, credentialing, and school climate to ensure that its standards and initiatives were aligned with the NCTAF recommendations.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

It was not coincidental that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was also created in 1996 to develop standards for advanced teacher credentialing. CEC members and staff participated in the development of the NBPTS Exceptional Needs standards and assessment. In addition, CEC developed its own advanced preparation standards for a variety of leadership roles within special education and collaborated closely to ensure that these CEC standards were aligned with the NBPTS standards in special education.

National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education

Arguably the most significant partner with CEC has been the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), now the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Originally formed in 1954, NCATE admitted CEC in 1975 as an associate member, and as a constituent member with full voting privileges in 1977. CEC and NCATE became partners in working to assure the quality of professional preparation of teachers through the accreditation of programs preparing prospective educator professionals and by extension the professional CEC approval (i.e., national recognition) of programs preparing special education professionals. In 2013, NCATE merged with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) to form CAEP and CEC continued this partnership with CAEP.

As part of the overall accreditation process, CAEP partners with Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) in education to aid in the review of discipline specific preparation programs. CEC is the SPA for special educator program review. Whether or not a program must participate in the respective SPA process as part of accreditation is dependent upon the partnership established between CAEP and a state. At one point, 36 states required that all preparation programs going through NCATE/CAEP accreditation also had to submit their program reports for review to the respective SPA. This meant that almost all of the special education programs in those 36 states were required to seek national recognition from CEC and demonstrate that their candidates met the CEC standards. Thus, through its partnership with CAEP, CEC was able to directly influence the preparation of special educators in all of these states. Although the number of states requiring SPA review has decreased, the CEC program review process continues to have a significant impact on the preparation of special educators.

Over the years, NCATE/CAEP developed criteria for the SPA review and for the development of SPA standards. These requirements have impacted the way CEC developed its standards.

National Assessment Collaborators

To ensure that national assessments aligned with the CEC preparation standards, CEC collaborated with Educational Testing Service in its development of the Praxis II and with the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity in its development of the edTPA as they developed assessments for beginning special educators. CEC members and staff were part of the development process for both of these discipline-specific assessments.

American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education

Also of note was the partnership with and data resources of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE). As a collegial partner, AACTE was invaluable in its communications with the heads of the colleges of education across the country, as well as the significant information the AACTE database provided on preparation programs. CEC was a regular participant and presenter in its annual meetings with the deans of the colleges of education.

Credentialing Frameworks

In 1997, the U.S. Congress reauthorized P.L. 94-142 and titled it the “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA, 1997). A major focus of IDEA concerned the assurance that all learners, as much as possible, would have access to the general curriculum. Concurrently, many state credentialing agencies, even while maintaining exceptionality-based and age-based credentials, were approving credentialing frameworks that included groups and of exceptionalities and levels of severity (e.g., mild/moderate, and severe/profound).

CEC PSPC responded to these emerging state multicategorical credentialing frameworks while maintaining rigorous validated standards by working in collaboration with the KSSC to develop two multicategorical Specialty Sets of knowledge and skills based on the exceptionality-specific Specialty Sets that had already been validated.

In the Spring of 1998, the CEC Delegate Assembly approved the development of these CEC Specialty Sets to address multicategorical credentialing frameworks. In late 1998, the CEC PSPC approved the CEC Curriculum Referenced Licensing and Program Accreditation Framework that used curriculum to delineate the two Specialty Sets of the framework: one for special education teachers of students with disabilities who are most likely to make progress in an **individualized general curriculum** and the other for special education teachers of students who are most likely to make progress in an **individualized independence curriculum**. This CEC Curriculum Referenced Licensing and Program Accreditation Framework retained the strengths of the exceptionality-referenced approach while providing clear guidance for credentialing bodies and preparation programs that had moved to multicategorical credentialing and preparation frameworks. It was also in consonance with the focus on access to the general curriculum delineated in IDEA 1997.

Performance-Based Standards and Program Reviews

In 1998 with the oversight of the PSPC, the KSSC validated Specialty Sets for three advanced special education specialties, i.e., Special Education Transition Specialists, Special Education Administrators, and Special Education Educational Diagnosticians. Likewise, in 1998 CEC added the Specialty Set for Special Education Paraeducators, validated in collaboration with the National Resource Center for Paraeducators. In 1998, the PSPC also added select validated items to the Initial Common Core for all beginning special educators focusing on the use of research-based practice. All of these were included in the 3rd edition *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (CEC,1998).

Additionally, in 1998 CEC began considering how to shift from a curriculum-based to an authentic performance outcome approach to program review. With the oversight of the PSPC,

the KSSC edited the Specialty Set Knowledge and Skill items for initial special education preparation programs and for advanced special education preparation programs. The KSSC began by rigorously sorting all the Specialty Set knowledge and skills into the 10 categories of the InTASC standards. They next analyzed all the items in each of the categories and wrote a narrative standard that addressed the essential concepts of the Initial Specialty Sets. Once again, this provided credentialing bodies in the U.S., as well as relevant preparation programs, with a clear understanding of the knowledge and skills needed.

By 2000, CEC had edited the Specialty Sets to improve clarity and reduce redundancy and validated additional multicultural knowledge and skills for the CEC Initial Common Core, as well as additional items in the areas of access to the general education curriculum, technology, and collaboration.

CEC approved these rich narrative statements, identified as the CEC Performance-Based Standards for the Approval of Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs in 2001 and they were included in the 5th Edition *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (CEC, 2003).

It was not until 2003 that NCATE adopted performance-based unit accreditation standards for itself and shifted its own review procedures from an input-based system of accreditation to unit reviews focused on candidate performance. However, in 2001 CEC requested and NCATE approved CEC performance-based standards procedures for program reviews.

The CEC Performance-Based Standards provided guidance to programs on the key components of their performance assessment systems. The Performance-Based Standards required programs to build performance assessment systems that were comprehensive, aligned to the standards, included multiple measures, and provided for planning program improvement.

In 2002, the CEC PSPC changed the Clinical Practice Standard in the performance-based program review process. The Clinical Practice Standard had been primarily based on a count of field-based practicum hours. In line with CECs commitment to the importance of clinical practice as an essential part of professional preparation, the new Field Experiences and Clinical Practice Standard required that preparation programs provide evidence for appropriate clinical experiences that were supervised by appropriate personnel to ensure that candidates are prepared for safe and effective practice. Rather than emphasizing numbers of hours, the new Field Experiences and Clinical Practice Standard focused on the kinds of relevant practica experiences provided, their sequence, and supervision by qualified personnel.

Also, in 2002 CEC formally expressed its expectation that preparation programs whether traditional or alternative should demonstrate their alignment with CEC Preparation Standards and their candidates' mastery of the CEC Preparation Standards through submission to CEC performance-based review.

In 2003, CEC revised procedures for Specialty Set Validation Studies and initiated a process by which each knowledge and skill would have a documented literature, research, and/or practice

base. These new procedures were included in the 5th edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (CEC, 2003).

NCATE (now CAEP) was responsible for accrediting the overarching teacher education unit, e.g., College of Education, while CEC had the responsibility of nationally recognizing quality special education preparation programs within the unit. To provide a consistent performance-based review process for the NCATE Specialty Professional Associations (SPAs), in 2005 NCATE convened a working group of representatives from several SPAs and chaired by the CEC representative to the NCATE Board. This group, with a great deal of input and feedback from the field, determined that all SPA standards must be performance-based and must consist of no more than seven standards with no more than a total of 28 elements. The NCATE criteria were adopted by CAEP in the transition from NCATE to CAEP. By 2012, when CEC Professional Preparation Standards were due for review, CEC had once again realigned and revised its standards to meet the NCATE requirements.

The reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, titled the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001) endorsed setting high standards and establishing measurable goals to improve individual outcomes in education. It required public schools to improve their quality of instruction by implementing "scientifically based research" practices in the classroom, parent involvement programs, and professional development activities for those students that are not encouraged or expected to attend college. This reauthorization reflected a national focus on performance-based outcomes and the use of evidence-based practices. During this period, CEC was likewise developing a program review process to incorporate the performance-based outcomes and to assure that evidence-based practice was addressed sufficiently.

Highly Qualified Teacher

In the reauthorization of IDEA (IDEA, 2004), United States policymakers attempted to align several points between IDEA and NCLB. One of the points of alignment was a requirement for what they referred to as "Highly Qualified Teachers" (HQT). The federal guidance for HQT in special education went so far as to permit individuals with no classroom or preparation to be counted as highly qualified by a state by simply being **enrolled** (emphasis added) in an alternative non-CEC approved preparation program. In essence a state could count an individual as a HQT **without any preparation and without ever entering a classroom** (emphasis added). At a time when fully prepared and qualified special educators were in critically short supply, the government was permitting schools to tell parents unqualified and unprepared special educators were "highly qualified." In response, CEC's PSPC developed and CEC's policy section disseminated the CEC guidelines for highly qualified special educators and provided guidance to its members and to states.

Preparation Standards Refinements

By 2004, the PSPC conducted a special validation to strengthen required knowledge and skill for the use of evidenced-based research to the initial common core and the committee began validation of professional standards for advanced roles in special education.

The PSPC developed the six Advanced Special Education Content Standards and the Advanced Common Core of knowledge and skills in 2006. In the same year, the PSPC

reorganized the Advanced Specialty Sets for both Special Education Technology Specialist and Special Education Transition Specialist around the six Advanced Content Standards.

The CEC Board requested and the PSPC submitted its report on “Promoting Standards” and began implementing a pilot of procedures to study and describe the evidence bases of professional practices in 2007. In addition, that year the CEC PSPC revalidated Initial Specialty Sets for Special Education Teachers of Individuals with Gifts and Talents and for Special Education Teachers of Individuals in Early Childhood Special Education and Advanced Specialties for Early Childhood and Early Intervention Specialist.

In 2009, CEC published the 6th edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (CEC, 2009). This edition contained the program assessment system standards for the first time.

In late 2012, NCATE once again approved updated revisions of the CEC Initial and Advanced Preparation Standards for Special Educators. The revised Preparation Standards supported CEC’s continued leadership in performance-based approval of special education preparation programs. The CEC Professional Preparation Standards, including their documented evidence bases, adopted a structure of seven standards with twenty-eight major elements that brought its structure into alignment with all the professional association partners in NCATE. In 2015, CEC published these revisions in the 7th edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (CEC, 2015).

In addition, by 2013 CEC had validated or revalidated Specialty Sets for a variety of advanced roles in special education that provided opportunities for career ladders in special education and encouraged practicing special education professionals to develop advanced areas of expertise and leadership. The Advanced Common Core Specialty Set was also revalidated. Concomitantly, a number of other new advanced role validation studies were in progress or in the planning stages. The PSPC also completed development of documented literature-bases for the respective Specialty Sets classified into 3 categories: research-based, emerging, and practice-based.

In 2013, CEC and The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) developed a set of professional preparation standards for teachers of individual with exceptional gifts and talents that met NCATE/CAEP criteria. Both NAGC and CEC agreed to retire the Gifted and Talented Specialty Set and permit NAGC to assume responsibility for reviewing GT programs for NCATE.

The 2020 CEC Preparation Standards

Immediately after the NCATE/CAEP approval of the 2012 CEC Professional Preparation Standards CEC began planning for revisions for the 2020 Standards. The CEC Board used a Professional Standards Workgroup (PSWG) to make recommendations for CEC’s ongoing work around professional standards over the next seven years. One outgrowth of the PSWG was the creation of another committee called the CEC Standards Framing Paper Workgroup (FPWG). The FPWG was charged with developing recommendations and guidelines for the process of updating CEC standards. Their recommendations were published in *Shaping the Future of Special Education: Framing CEC’s Professional Preparation Standards* (CEC, 2017). This

Framing Paper established a plan for the development of the next sets of CEC Standards and included recommendations for the content of the standards, including the 2020 CEC Professional Preparation Standards should be influenced by:

- CEC's High-Leverage Practices (McLeskey et al, 2017) and the CEC Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices (CEC Division for Early Childhood, 2014), and
- Once the new practice-based preparation standards were developed and in use, the Knowledge and Skill Sets should no longer be used to inform program reviews.

In 2015 after a 3-year dormant period the KSSC resumed work with the relevant CEC Divisions to ensure that the Specialty Sets were updated regularly following the Validation Study guidelines in the *CEC Validation Study Resource Manual*.

In 2017, CEC established a CEC Standards Development Work Group (SDWG) charged with developing the next set of CEC Standards, following the recommendations of the FPWG.

In 2018, the CEC Board of Directors approved requests by DEC and CASE to develop sets of professional preparation standards for individuals with exceptional early intervention needs and early childhood special education needs and Special Education Administration, respectively. By doing so, CEC shifted away from having a single set of initial standards and a single set of advanced standards to having multiple sets of standards for specific disciplines. Both DEC and CASE, began the process of developing standards, based on the recommendations of the Framing Paper.

The National Association for Gifted Children NAGC terminated its relationship with CAEP in 2018, and CEC resumed responsibility for review of gifted preparation programs.

In 2020, CEC approved three sets of new standards: The Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Special Educators (K-12); The Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educator (B-8) and: The Advanced Administrator of Special Education Professional Leadership Standards

CEC Independent Program Accreditation

Since CEC began reviewing preparation programs with NCATE, it had also always offered an independent CEC program recognition option outside of the partnership with NCATE. Over the years, this option was very rarely used as most preparation programs chose a pathway to NCATE national accreditation and CEC program recognition. However, in 2020 the CEC Board approved for CEC to become an accrediting body on its own while also maintaining its partnership with CAEP. As of this writing, CEC is preparing the application to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Related Professional Standards Initiatives

Professionally Recognized Special Educators

Back in 1997, CEC launched a bold initiative, the Professionally Recognized Special Educator (PRSE) program. The purpose of the program was to provide a national credential for special educators who met CEC professional criteria. The PRSE was designed to demonstrate that the holder was fully licensed and had the appropriate specialized education and experience to work as an effective professional in the field.

The PRSE was available in three areas: Special Education Teaching, Special Education Administration, and Educational Diagnosis. Each area had criteria for education, state licensure, and years of experience. An additional criteria was added for those applying after July 2000, a passing score on an appropriate assessment of required knowledge and skills.

Between 1998 and 2003, approximately 2000 educators were awarded the PRSE. Reluctantly in 2003, CEC terminated the program due to difficulty in identifying appropriate national assessments for each of the three PRSE areas and insufficient applicants to sustain the initiative financially.

Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners

In April 1998, CEC began an initiative that attracted significant attention. CEC appointed a Presidential Commission on the Conditions of Special Education Teaching and Learning. Its charge was twofold: to identify those barriers that obstruct high quality special education; and to develop an action agenda that would galvanize the education community to ensure that every student with an exceptionality has a highly qualified teacher who is able to practice under optimal professional conditions and in suitable settings. The work of the Commission resulted in the publication of *Bright Futures for Exceptional Children: An Action Agenda to Achieve Quality Conditions for Teaching and Learning for Every Exceptional Learner* (Kozleski et al, 2000)

The report concluded that ultimately the work on the conditions of teaching and shortages of special educators must achieve three outcomes:

- (1) that every student with exceptionalities receives individualized services and supports from caring and competent professional educators.
- (2) that every special and general educator has the teaching and learning conditions to practice effectively. and
- (3) that every instructional leader establishes strong expectations for the use of effective and validated instructional practices.

To achieve these outcomes would require collective action from all constituencies. Together, these constituencies or “Partners for Action” must ensure that the teaching and learning conditions that make a difference in the learning results of students with exceptionalities are present in every school for each student with exceptional needs. To realize this vision, the Commission called upon the educational community and the public to endorse the three outcomes and to work with CEC to implement an action agenda to achieve the outcomes.

The Commission ended the report with the identification of specific action steps to achieve this agenda. While significant progress has been made, much remains to be accomplished in the action agenda presented in the report. Over the following years and as of this writing, the report is still widely and frequently cited.

Evidence-Based Practice Initiative

In addition to developing the evidence-base for the knowledge and skills in all the Specialty Sets, the PSPC initiated the Evidence-Based Practices Initiative (EBPI) developed jointly with the CEC Division for Research. The Evidence-Based Practice Studies Manual (CEC, 2008) elaborated the criteria for studying and classifying the evidence level of special education practices: positive, insufficient, and negative evidence-base with the insufficient category subdivided into potentially positive, mixed effects, and no discernible effects.

The CEC Board approved a beta-test of the EBPI. The EBPI was another example of PSPC leadership in providing guidance to special educators. Although the CEC Board did not support the EBPI beyond the beta test, individuals in the CEC Research Division published the criteria that have become widely used by special education researchers.

Ethics and Practice Standards

Before completing the historical review of the period, mention of the revision of the CEC Ethics and Practice Standards is in order. The CEC Code of Ethics and Professional Practice Standards for Educators of Individuals with Exceptionalities were originally adopted by the CEC Delegate Assembly in 1983. The Preamble to the 1st edition stated that the “knowledge and skills” were dynamic and should change as science and knowledge advanced. This has likewise been true for the CEC Professional Preparation Standards. Every edition of the “Red Book”, from 1995, through the 7th edition in 2015 reflects the premise that the Code of Ethics is a living document.

In 2009, the CEC PSPC revised and updated the Code of Ethics and Professional Practice Standards. Perhaps the most notable revision was the addition of a “Do No Harm” ethical principle, a hallmark of mature professional ethics. The revisions also focused on using science as a foundation of ethical practice.

In 2010, the CEC Board approved the revisions of the CEC Ethics and Professional Practice Standards in preparation for publication in the 7th edition of the *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (CEC, 2015). The 7th edition once again summarized the role of professional standards as they affect special educators throughout their careers from preparation through initial credentialing and induction to professional development and advanced certification. Additionally, it provided an overview of how the CEC quality standards guide the practice of special educators at each step of their career.

High Leverage Practices

In fall 2014, the Board of Directors of CEC approved a proposal from the PSPC to develop a set of special education high-leverage practices (HLPs). CEC recognized that reaching agreement within the profession regarding which practices to include would require lengthy discussion and consideration. CEC partnered with the University of Florida Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Center and CEC’s Teacher Education Division (TED) to form an HLP writing group (HLPWG) tasked with establishing criteria for identifying HLPs, selecting the practices, and writing the final document. The HLPWG was composed of twelve special education practitioners, scholars, teacher educators, and advocates who were CEC members, selected for their knowledge and expertise around both the teacher

preparation and the evidence base behind the practices in question. Based on the feedback from a survey and multiple focus groups, the HLPWG identified and the CEC Board approved 22 of the most critical practices that all special educators should master and be able to demonstrate (McLeskey, et al., 2017). The 22 practices were those special educators used frequently and that had been shown to improve student outcomes. The HLPWG viewed the HLPs as practices that teacher educators could use to develop an understanding of core practices, determine how such practices may be best used, and identify how they can be improved.

Epilogue

Through the 1980s, 90s and the first two decades of the millennium, as CEC's agent responsible for moving special educators to become trusted professionals, the PSPC was diligent in making the CEC Professional Preparation Standards strong and vigorous. The PSPC with its CEC colleagues across the organization ensured that the standards are valid and current and used to the maximum to further professionalization of Special Education.

As previously discussed, in 2000 CEC developed a uniform set of professional preparation standards based on and informed by the Specialty Sets. Program reviewers use the CEC Professional Preparation Standards with their components in the CEC/CAEP program review process. This rigorous peer review process results in CEC National Recognition for those programs that provide clear and convincing evidence that their candidates meet the expectations delineated in the CEC Professional Preparation Standards. States and other jurisdictions use the CEC Professional Preparation Standards also in development of credentialing standards. Preparation programs continue to use the Specialty Sets to guide their program development and curriculum improvement; and practicing special education professionals use the knowledge and skills to guide their professional development.

CEC remains at the forefront and continues to be dedicated to assuring that special education becomes a fully recognized standards-based profession. The CEC Professional Preparation Standards are at the core of preparation program recognition and entry-level as well as advanced credentialing. The CEC Standards are the gold standard ensuring prospective special educators demonstrate the professionally validated knowledge and skills to practice safely and effectively. The CEC Professional Preparation Standards have evolved across time and will continue to evolve through a collaborative process involving PSPC and CEC members. The CEC Standards arrived at by professional consensus across the varied roles of Special Education have been and will continue to be the foundation of our profession.

Chronology of CEC Professional Standards

- 1922 CEC proclaims the establishment of professional standards for the field of special education as a fundamental aim of CEC.
- 1962 CEC convenes National Convention with professional standards as the theme.
- 1963 CEC purpose statement includes standards for professional personnel.
- 1965 CEC holds National Conference on Professional Standards.
- 1966 CEC publishes Professional Standards for Personnel in the Education of Exceptional Children.
- 1976 CEC publishes Guidelines for Personnel in the Education of Exceptional Children.
- 1977 CEC and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) form a partnership for approving training programs.
- 1980 NCATE approves CEC initial standards for recognizing special education preparation programs.
- 1981 CEC Delegate Assembly charges CEC to develop, promote, and implement preparation and certification standards and a code of ethics.
- 1982 CEC mission statement calls for CEC to establish and promote appropriate professional standards.
- 1983 CEC approves Code of Ethics, Standards for Professional Practice, Standards for the Preparation of Special Education Personnel, and Standards for Entry to Professional Practice, and charges the Professional Standard & Practice Standing Committee with their implementation.
- 1984 NCATE approves its own procedures to require colleges and universities to submit their folios to the respective specialty professional associations (SPA).
- 1985 NCATE approves CEC guidelines for program approval of both basic and advanced special education preparation programs.
- 1986 CEC approves guidelines for program review folios.
CEC initiates reviewing folios of programs seeking Special Education national accreditation.
- 1987 CEC publishes *Standards and Guidelines for Curriculum Excellence in Personnel Preparation Programs in Special Education*.
- 1989 CEC Delegate Assembly approves a framework for the PSPC to use in developing the CEC Standards for Entry to Professional Practice.
The PSPC establishes the Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee.
- 1990 NCATE approves the CEC revised Guidelines for Program Approval of both basic and advanced special education preparation programs.

- 1992 CEC approves the Common Core Knowledge and Skills Essential for All Beginning Special Education Teachers.
CEC approves Guidelines for Program Approval for institutions of higher education (IHE) including institutional, faculty, and program resources independent of NCATE.
- 1993 CEC approves the revised Standards for Entry to Professional Practice.
CEC approves the revised Guidelines for Program Approval outside the NCATE Accreditation process for IHEs including institutional, faculty, and program resources.
- 1995 CEC approves knowledge and skills sets for initial areas of specialization and submits them for NCATE adoption.
CEC publishes *What Every Special Educator Must Know: The International Standards for the Preparation and Certification of Special Education Teachers* (1st Edition).
- 1996 CEC publishes *What Every Special Educator Must Know: The International Standards for the Preparation and Certification of Special Education Teachers* (2nd Edition).
- 1997 NCATE initiates the NCATE 2000 project that shifts the focus of program accreditation from program inputs to candidate performance.
- 1998 CEC approves Advanced Specialty Sets for the following advanced special education roles: Special Education Transition Specialists, Special Education Administrators, and Educational Diagnosticians.
CEC approves essential knowledge and skills for Special Education Paraeducators.
CEC revises the Standards for Entry to Professional Practice.
CEC approves Guidelines for Continuing Education.
CEC approves revisions to the Common Core of Knowledge and Skills Essential for All Beginning Special Education Teachers.
CEC approves the Curriculum-Referenced Licensing and Program Accreditation Framework.
CEC publishes *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (3rd Edition).
- 2000 CEC edits the Specialty Sets to improve clarity and reduce redundancy.
CEC adds validated multicultural items to the CEC Initial Common Core.
CEC publishes *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (4th Edition).
CEC reorganizes the items in the Specialty Sets into 10 domains that coordinate directly with the domains of the Interstate New Teacher and Assessment and Support Consortium's (INTASC) Core Principles.
CEC revises its procedures for programs developing performance assessment systems.
- 2001 NCATE approves CEC performance standards and review procedures.

- CEC approves revalidated Initial Specialty Set for Learning Disabilities
- CEC approves Knowledge and Skill set for Special Education Paraeducators.
- CEC approves Advanced Specialty Set for Special Education Technology Specialist.
- 2002 The CEC PSPC revises the Clinical Practice Standard in the performance-based program review process
- 2003 CEC approves revised procedures for Specialty Set Validation Studies to initiate process by which each knowledge and skill is supported by a documented literature, research, and/or practice base.
- CEC publishes *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (5th Edition).
- 2004 CEC adds validated items to the Initial Common Core focused on the use of research.
- 2005 CEC approves the revalidated Specialty Set for Teachers of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities.
- 2006 CEC approves the 6 Advanced Special Education Content Standards and the Advanced Common Core Knowledge and Skills.
- CEC approves Advanced Specialty Sets for Special Education Technology Specialist and Special Education Transition Specialist reorganized around the six Advanced Content Standards.
- 2007 The Professional Standards and Practices Committee submits report on “Promoting Standards” as requested by the CEC Board.
- CEC initiates development of procedures to classify the scientific evidence bases of professional practices, referred to as the Evidence-based Practices Initiative (EBPI).
- CEC approves revalidated Initial Specialty Set for Special Education Teachers of Individuals with Gifts and Talents and for Special Education Teachers of individuals in Early Childhood Special Education and the Advanced Specialty Set for Special Education Early Childhood and Early Intervention Specialist.
- 2008 CEC approves revalidated Initial Specialty Sets for Special Education Teachers of Individuals with Emotional and Behavior Disorders, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Physical and Health Disabilities, and Visual Impairments.
- CEC approves revalidated Advanced Specialty Sets for Special Education Administrators, Diagnosticians, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialists.
- CEC approves beta test of the Evidence-Based Practices Initiative.
- 2009 CEC publishes *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (6th Edition).
- CEC approves revalidated Initial and Advanced Specialty Sets for Special Educators of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities & Autism.

- CEC approves Specialty Set for Special Education Interveners for Individuals with Deafblindness.
- 2010 CEC approves revalidated Initial Specialty Sets for the Common Core, Individualized General Curriculum, Individualized Independence Curriculum, and for Deafblindness.
- CEC approves revalidated Advanced Specialty Sets for Special Education Inclusion Specialist and Learning Disabilities Specialist.
- CEC approves the revised CEC Code of Ethics.
- 2011 CEC approves revised CEC Standards for Professional Practice.
- 2012 CEC approves revised Initial and Advanced Professional Preparation Standards.
- 2013 A stand-alone set of standards for Gifted and Talented programs are jointly developed by CEC and NAGC, and NAGC assumes sole responsibility for reviewing gifted and talented programs. CEC terminates the CEC Specialty Set for preparing Special Educators of Individuals with Exceptional Gifts and Talents.
- NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) finalize a merger to form the new Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), and CEC joins a new partnership with CAEP.
- 2015 CEC publishes *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (7th Edition).
- 2017 CEC approves revalidated Initial Specialty Set for Teachers of individuals in Early Childhood Special Education and the Advanced Specialty Set for Early Childhood and Early Intervention Specialist.
- CEC Technology and Media (TAM) Division notifies CEC that it will not revalidate the Advanced Specialty Set for Technology Specialist.
- CEC Standards Framing Paper Workgroup (FPWG) recommendations are published in *Shaping the Future of Special Education: Framing CEC's Professional Preparation Standards*, (2017) outlining a plan for the development of the next sets of CEC Standards.
- 2018 CEC approves revalidated Initial Specialty Sets for Special Educators of the Blind and Visual Impairments, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
- CEC approves revalidated Advanced Specialty Set for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist.
- The PSPC approves the requests from the Council for Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and the CEC Division for Early Childhood (DEC) to develop stand-alone sets of standards.
- NAGC decides to terminate its partnership with CAEP. CEC agrees to take responsibility for reviewing Gifted programs as part of the CAEP program review process.
- 2019 The CEC Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (DDEL) notifies CEC they will not re-validate the Initial Specialty Set for Learning Disabilities.

CEC Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD) notifies CEC that they will not re-validate the Initial Specialty Set for Developmental Disabilities and Autism.

2020 CEC approves the Initial Practice-Based Professional Special Educator Standards (2020) and the Special Education Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators Standards.

CEC approves revalidated Advanced Specialty Set for Special Education Diagnostic Specialist.

CEC approves proposal to become an accrediting body while also maintaining its partnership with CAEP.

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