



CEC 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION Candidate Biography

Biographical Information:

I'm a Kentucky girl in a California world. I'm a tea drinker respectfully collaborating with coffee-fueled colleagues. Over the past 36 years in Deaf and Hard of Hearing education, I've had the privilege of serving students from preschool to post-secondary on both the East and West Coasts. From my early days as an educational interpreter in Kentucky to teaching at the California School for the Deaf, Riverside and facilitating itinerant services through Riverside County Office of Education, my passion has always centered on access, advocacy, and achievement for every learner.

I've proudly guided 14 "Yes I Can!" Award recipients, each with a story that reminds me why I remain in this field. In 2024, I was honored to be named CEC Teacher of the Year—a recognition that reflects not just my work, but the collective dedication of the students, families, and professionals I've collaborated with across decades. While that recognition celebrates my career, it's the daily wins that matter most: the "aha" moments, from when a student embraces their technology, to finding a hearing aid in a vast soccer field before the lawnmower! Those are the moments that stay with me.

My roles have included educational interpreter, classroom teacher, induction coach, workshop leader, and policy advocate. I've served on CEC workgroups, contributed to our 3-day statewide training, and represented California educators through CEC's Representative Assembly. Whether planning IEPs, leading professional development, or advocating at the Special Education Legislative Summit in Washington, D.C., I bring lived experience, leadership, and heart to the table.

If you believe in elevating voices and hands that reflect both longevity and innovation, I ask for your vote. I'm committed to ensuring CEC remains a space where all educators—regardless of tea or coffee preference—feel seen, supported, and inspired to keep going.

Theresa Copple, M.Ed.



**Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Itinerant Teacher, Riverside
County Office of Education
Riverside, CA USA**

Candidate Statements:

**What is the most important reason, or what motivated/inspired you, to apply for the Board of Directors?
(Limit 150 words)**

I am applying for the CEC Board of Directors to bring a perspective of low incidence disabilities, in particular students who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) as well as CEC DHH attendees and to represent the unique viewpoint of itinerant teachers. As a long-time educator and advocate, I've seen (and experienced) the quiet strength it takes to navigate classrooms and school systems that may not

understand exceptional needs. As a former educational ASL interpreter, I would like to be a resource in supporting CEC's efforts to better accommodate our members who are deaf and hard of hearing.

I believe in celebrating student growth and resilience, which is why I am passionate about supporting and promoting the "Yes I Can!" Awards. These recognitions empower students and remind us why this work matters.

CEC has shaped my professional journey and I want to give back as a servant leader.

What makes CEC's mission meaningful to you? (Limit 150 words)

The very first word in CEC's mission is "cultivating" bringing to my mind the imagery of gathering and growing and I am grateful. So very grateful. I feel CEC has been a lifeline for me and I am so glad to have been cultivated, supported and empowered by this organization. In a time where I feel isolated and alone, CEC has not only been there for me but encouraged me, expressed that I am valued, and challenged me to grow professionally. CEC has supported my students through the "Yes I Can!" Awards as well as the resources I have brought back from the trainings. CEC has changed how I teach, and how I think about teaching in the future. Through the resources, conferences and networking opportunities, I have renewed energy to pour back into my work community and my students.

There is such a great range of individual backgrounds and experiences that cannot be easily conveyed by answering simple demographic questions. Given [CEC's view of diversity](#), what facets of your life provide a context for the various experiences and perspectives you bring to discussions and your work? (Limit 150 words.)

I am a Kentucky girl living in a California world. I grew up across the river from Cincinnati. My training has been mostly East coast, and my teaching career has been on the West coast. Hospitality and inclusivity go hand-in-hand where I am from. I like people to feel welcome and comfortable whether they are in my home, office, or in my unconventional classroom. I am an itinerant teacher, so my classroom can be a picnic table, two chairs in a former closet, or a space in the RSP room. Being an itinerant has provided me with the opportunity to be a co-teacher in general education classes, CTE classes, RSP rooms, Self-Contained classrooms, non-public schools and even Juvenile Hall. Being in such a diversified environment gives me an unique perspective in a wide range of learning environments.

Provide three specific examples of how your leadership experiences, including professional and volunteer, have had an impact on fostering change or moving an organization/entity forward. (Limit 300 words)

Promoting Recognition and Celebration: From 2014 to 2025, I've nominated 12 students who received "Yes, I Can!" Awards at the state and national levels. I've nominated educators for honors such as RCOE's Teacher of the Year and the Hearing Loss Association(HLAA) Community Service Awards. By commending students and educators locally, we bring awareness to the work of Special Education and CEC.

Sustained Volunteer Leadership: For 16 years, I've supported the HLAA WalkforHearing. At my first Walk4Hearing in 2009, I pushed both of my children in strollers. Then, they walked with me as I served as the La Sierra ASL Club Walk Captain. When my son entered high school, he became Captain. Upon graduating, the title passed to his sister who is our current Captain. As a family, we have fundraised for the HLAA for 16 years. Volunteer work is a core family value.

Active Engagement with CEC: During conventions, I've introduced myself to attendees who use ASL as an educator who can sign. I have interpreted on the spot at different booths when communication needed facilitating. In a formal capacity, I served two years as CA/CEC RA-South, presented a "Tea for Two" workshop about co-teaching (with real teacups and cookies), helped coordinate the state convention, and spearheaded the nomination for 2018 Courtesy Resolution honoring Past-President Gerald Hime.

In 2024, I was honored to receive CEC Teacher of the Year and served as emcee for the "Yes, I Can!" Awards. I've shared instructional strategies and accommodations through interviews on an educational talk show, in a SIG forum, and in a college textbook. Another honor was joining the California team at SELS that provided a new audience to voice concerns for the DHH community in the areas of funding, teacher shortage, and implementation of IDEA. What an unforgettable year!

Membership Information:

Years of CEC Membership: 10

Division Membership(s):

Division for Communication, Language, and Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DCH)

