



CEC 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

Candidate Biography

Biographical Information:

Dr. Donovan Griffin-Blake is a passionate special education leader, and advocate, with over 26 years of experience serving in public education. Born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, she earned a B.S. in Biology from Howard University, a Master's in Transition Special Education from The George Washington University, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Bowie State University. As the mother of two daughters—one of whom has a disability—Dr. Griffin-Blake brings both professional expertise and personal insight to her work.

Donovan previously served as President of the Maryland Unit of the Council for Exceptional Children. Throughout her career, she has been committed to advancing equity, inclusion, and opportunity for students with disabilities and their families. As the parent of a young adult with special needs, she is a passionate advocate who leads workshops for churches and nonprofits, training staff to support families of individuals with special needs and empowering families to advocate effectively for their children. She has supervised special education departments in high-needs schools and led inclusive teaching initiatives in Maryland's largest public school district. Donovan's leadership has been recognized through her consulting work with the White House Initiative on HBCUs, the Department of Defense, and various postsecondary institutions. She currently serves as an Instructional Coach in Prince George's County Public Schools, supporting educators in improving outcomes for diverse learners.

Dr. Griffin-Blake has received many acknowledgements, including Special Educator of the Year by the Montgomery County Council of PTAs. She received the community impact award from TeachersFest, Inc. and most recently, she was honored with the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award from AmeriCorps.

Donovan Griffin-Blake, Ed.D.



**Science Education Coordinator
Bowie State University
Department of Natural Sciences
Bowie, MD 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 Board of Directors because of my lifelong commitment to advocating for students with disabilities and advancing equity in special education. As a Special Education Department Chair, special education teacher, leader within the Council for Exceptional Children Maryland chapter, and parent of a child with a disability, I have seen both the systemic challenges and the tremendous potential within this community.

Throughout my career, I have focused on creating programs and policies that ensure all students with disabilities have access to high-quality, inclusive education. Serving on the Board would allow me to share my expertise in program development, data-driven decision-making, and family engagement to support meaningful, systemic change. I am excited about the opportunity to collaborate with other passionate leaders to strengthen advocacy efforts and help shape policies and practices that empower exceptional learners to thrive in school and beyond.

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

CEC's mission to improve the educational success of children and youth with exceptionalities is both a professional calling and a personal commitment for me. With over 26 years in K–12 education, including experience as a special education department chair, I've seen the real-world impact of CEC's work on students and families. I'm also the mother of a daughter with a disability, Paige, who has overcome numerous challenges to become a self-advocate. My introduction to CEC came when I was first learning to advocate for her. The organization's resources and values empowered me and shaped my approach to advocacy—not just for my own child, but for countless others. CEC continues to influence how I lead, teach, and serve as a professor, consultant, and state CEC leader. I would be honored to bring this lived experience and professional expertise to the Board of Directors in support of CEC's vital mission.

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.)

CEC's view of diversity resonates deeply with both my personal and professional journey. As a mother of a daughter with a disability, I've navigated the special education system from both sides—first as a parent advocating for my child, and then as an educator and leader advocating for many. That experience fuels my commitment to ensuring that all voices, especially those of families and students, are valued in decision-making spaces.

Professionally, I've served as a educational leader across school settings, where I worked with students from diverse backgrounds. These roles required me to embrace cultural responsiveness, lead with empathy, and design inclusive practices that honored each student's lived experience.

As a Black woman, HBCU graduate, and leader in teacher and special education, I bring a perspective rooted in equity, resilience, and collaboration—values that directly align with CEC's mission to advance inclusive, equitable opportunities for individuals with exceptionalities.

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)

I have dedicated my career to advancing equity and excellence for students with disabilities. As Special Education Department Chair, I spearheaded efforts to enhance services for students and their families and trained school staff members. I led the development of staff training focused on inclusive practices, data-driven instruction, and family engagement, which significantly improved IEP compliance, academic outcomes, and collaboration across the school community.

In addition to my school-based leadership, I partner with a local church to provide free IEP support services to families, further demonstrating my commitment to empowering students and families beyond

the school walls. Quarterly, I host an IEP clinic for families to answer their questions and connect them to viable resources. I also lead workshops for church leaders to help build inclusive faith communities that welcome and support individuals with disabilities.

To expand my impact, I facilitate workshops at Bowie State University, training pre-service teachers and paraeducators on effective strategies for supporting students with disabilities. The workshop series is offered to help ensure that current teachers are prepared to work with all students. In the upcoming year, I am extending the workshops to local law enforcement. Through these efforts, I strive to foster meaningful change across educational and community spaces.

Membership Information:

Years of CEC Membership: 19

Division Membership(s):

Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (DDEL)

