

18.30 Access to General Education for Students With Disabilities

Resolution passed October 2013

Whereas, Washington State PTA has a mission to be a strong advocate for the education and well-being of all children; and with a particular focus on an inclusive and diverse educational environment; and

Whereas, federal and state law governing the rights of students with disabilities promote inclusive educational settings. Specifically, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '04) states “having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom to the maximum extent possible;” and

Whereas, best practices for inclusive education of students with disabilities result in the primary aims of education, such as “tolerance for diversity, equity, equality, community integration, and achievement for all students.” This means that “educators and researchers must focus on ways to ensure that inclusion continues to be fostered and that more effective integration strategies and techniques are developed;” and

Whereas, federal law governing the rights of students with disabilities (IDEA '04) demands inclusive approaches to educating them, specifically requiring that “each state must establish procedures to assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities...are educated with children who are not disabled.” Federal law views the removal of students with disabilities from their general education setting as a last resort. This means that schools may remove students “only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily;” and

Whereas, in February 2012, the Washington state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction reported that only 50.05% of students with disabilities were educated in the general education setting 80-100% of the time, and only 34.17% for 40- 79% of the time with no set targets to meet despite the fact that the United States Department of Education has cited that Washington state is not educating enough students with disabilities in general education classrooms; and

Whereas, federal law governing the rights of students with disabilities (IDEA '04) strengthens the role and responsibility of parents in determining what constitutes an appropriate education for their child. The law aims to ensure knowledgeable, active, and meaningful parent engagement in their child’s education program, school, and their classroom by providing accurate information and opportunities to participate in the decision-making process and development of educational plans; and

Whereas, parental involvement is vital to student success, and Washington state’s goal for parental participation in special education is currently unmet (goal of 28%). Improving parent engagement is vital to improving and reaching educational goals for students with disabilities.

Therefore, be it



Resolved, that Washington State PTA will advocate for better accountability regarding programs, policies and procedures at the state, educational service district, individual school district, and school building levels that ensure that students with disabilities are educated in the Least Restrictive Environment having access to the general education classroom and curriculum with appropriate supports, and learning alongside their typically developing peers according to the true meaning of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA '04); and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA will advocate at the federal, state, district, and school levels to create an environment that ensures that parents of children with disabilities are equal partners in education. Furthermore, that parents are provided the information and opportunities for meaningful engagement and participation in their child's educational program in school, resulting in students receiving appropriate supports and services to be prepared for college, career, and life.