

2021 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY PRIORITY

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the primary federal law authorizing state and local aid for special education and related services for children with disabilities. IDEA requires states to provide a free and appropriate public education to children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible. North Carolina PTA is committed to ensuring students with special needs have access to opportunities that make them college and career-ready and that parents are closely involved in the process. Every child deserves a high-quality education. The North Carolina PTA will work tirelessly to ensure all children, including those with special needs, have access to an optimum learning environment.

There are over 203,000 children in NC identified as children with disabilities. COVID-19 and the move to virtual learning has resulted in and caused significant and negative impacts on these students. Some children with disabilities simply cannot learn in an online environment. Many have lost access to helping professionals, therapists, and assistive technology when their schools closed. As these vulnerable students return to school buildings, they will require additional support due to lost instructional time and require help resetting their emotional and social functioning needs.

North Carolina PTA will support initiatives as well as encourage and advocate for legislation and policies that:

- Remove the cap on special education funding to allow coverage of all eligible children.
- Increase spending levels to fund special education service costs fully.
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- Ensure students with special needs are college and career-ready by receiving quality instruction and support from teachers, school counselors, and other specialized school support personnel that have completed the state licensure or certification process.
- Require schools to use positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) as an alternative to exclusionary school discipline practices such as in and out-of-school suspensions.
- Increase funding for Parent Training and Information (PTI) Centers to teach families of children with different abilities how to support and advocate for their child.