



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, DR. CLARK CAVIN

The Curse of Interesting Times

Lore tells us that the ancient Chinese had a curse, “May you have interesting times.” Texas educators today are certainly living under that curse. We definitely live in an interesting time in education.



During the last decade, enrollment in Texas public schools has increased by 771,000 to 4,671,493 students. That is the equivalent of adding a Fort Worth Independent School District to the state every year for ten years in a row. From the 2006-2007 academic year to the 2007-2008 academic year, the number of students identified as Limited English Proficient increased 43,560 to 775,432. So, more than half of the new students added, had Limited English Proficiency. Now we have added a Fort Worth ISD every year, with more than half of the students not proficient in English. This adds innumerable challenges to public schools throughout Texas, greatly increasing the interest of our times.

Of the 771,005 new students added over that decade, 724,356 of them were Hispanic making our Hispanic sub-population the largest at 47.2 percent. White students make up the second largest ethnic group at 34.8 percent of the population. Additionally, now more than 55 percent of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch and as such, are classified as economically disadvantaged. All of this multiplies the challenges and makes for interesting times.

Perhaps of more interest to the members of TCEC curiously our special education percentage has dropped from 12.1 percent in 1997-1998 to 10.2 percent in 2007-2008. But anyone who has been in a public school knows; we do not have fewer kids with special needs. Factors that have led to the decrease in special education percentages include funding changes; crack down on percentages as TEA “red flags”; and mandatory testing of all students regardless of handicapping condition or code.

So, while our special education numbers over the last decade have dropped and our Limited English Proficient numbers have increased, who is looking out for those 21,780 students who were previously served by special education? Interesting times indeed!

Furthermore, schools are under increasing pressures to assure that students who have Limited English Proficiency and Special Education labels pass the TAKS because these students often count five times: once as a student, once in special education, once as Hispanic, once as LEP, and once as economically disadvantaged. Anybody know where I can find a special education/ESL generalist?

So what? I have been through training recently that said the most important question that can be asked after reviewing data is, “So what?” What does all of this mean? What does it mean in light of the interesting times we now enjoy? What does it mean in light of NCLB re-authorization under the Obama administration? What does it all mean with a new cabinet? What does it all mean with Texas school funding and the legislature now in session?

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

In trying to make sense of it all, a few recommendations come to mind:

- We must continue to do right by kids. Assure that each student is getting the best instruction possible in his or her zone of proximal development.
- Institutions of higher learning must continue to adapt to the changing needs of the public schools and assure they are producing qualified teachers with certifications in special education and English as a second language.
- Make our voices heard to our legislators, both in Austin and in Washington on issues such as
 - Unfunded mandates
 - Adequate funding of public schools
 - Common sense issues such as the doing away with ludicrous standards and assessments such as:
 - 100 percent being proficient on state assessments and
 - TAKS Alternative for students with the most serious cognitive disabilities

As my term as President of the Texas Council for Exceptional Children winds down in a few months, I know I turn over the reins to others who are equally as passionate about education. I will go back with renewed fervor to fight for my students and will continue to make my voice heard. What about you? Are you advocating for your students? Are you letting Washington and Austin know how what they do affects your students? As an engaged member of the TCEC, you can make a difference.

(All data taken from *Enrollment in Texas Public Schools 2007-2008*, published by the Division of Accountability Research, Department of Assessment, Accountability, and Data Quality, Texas Education Agency, January 2009; available online at tea.state.tx.us).

2009 CONFERENCE

By Dr. Tammy Stephens, President Elect



The 2009 Annual Conference of the Texas Council for Exceptional Children has something for everyone and will enlighten, inform, and empower you to become better at what you do. The theme for the conference is: "Providing a Menu of Services through Collaboration: Choose Your Fixins." Download a registration form or register online at www.tcecweb.org (Click on "State Conference").

Join us June 18-20 at the Westin Hotel-DFW location. Make your hotel reservation directly and make them early! Room rates: Single and Double \$99/per night. The Westin Hotel is located near the DFW Airport at 4545 West John Carpenter Freeway, Irving, Texas 75063. On-line hotel reservation is available at <http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/res?id=0901135081&key=517D> or you may call Westin's Central Reservation Office at 888-627-8617.

Reservations must be made by **May 18, 2009 in order to receive the conference rate. **Reference TCEC when making reservations.** The hotel provides complimentary shuttle service from DFW airport and convenient free parking at the hotel. The hotel also offers shuttle services (\$10.00 per person round-trip) to Grapevine Mills Mall.

For additional information, contact Tammy L. Stephens, Conference Coordinator at TStephens1@twu.edu.



TCEC CONFERENCE 2009
**"Providing a Menu of Services
through Collaboration: Choose
Your Fixins."**

June 18-20, 2009
Westin Hotel-DFW



TCEC NOMINATIONS

By Dr. Jerry Whitworth, Past President

The long and successful history of TCEC has always been linked to individuals who believe strongly in our mission and who are willing to give generously of their time and energy to keep this organization vibrant and effective. The TCEC Nominations Committee, consisting of Jerry Whitworth, Suzanne Thomas, Candace Baker, and Carol Layton is seeking members in good standing with CEC who are interested in helping TCEC continue its service to the field by serving as secretary, treasurer or vice president for the 2009-2010 year. The committee has included an excerpt below from the TCEC constitution (available to view in its entirety at <http://www.tcecweb.org>) that explains the expectations and responsibilities of each position. Note that the Vice President shall succeed the President Elect and the President Elect shall automatically succeed to the presidency at the expiration of the President's term of office.

Our organization depends on talented members who are willing to serve in these offices. Such service not only benefits our organization, but also is a valuable and important benefit for those who serve.

The committee asks that you please reflect on your 2009-2010 schedule and commitments and consider fulfilling one of these positions. Members may submit nominations to any one of the committee members through April 1, 2009 via e-mail: Jerry Whitworth (Jwhitworth@mail.twu.edu), Suzanne Thomas (Suzanne.Thomas@uttyler.edu), Candace Baker (candace.baker@tamiu.edu), or Carol Layton (calayton@hsutx.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important responsibility!

TCEC Constitution

Here is an excerpt from the TCEC Constitution regarding the duties of the elected officers:

The powers and duties of the **Vice President** shall be:

1. To serve in the place of, and with the authority of, the president in case of absence or inability to serve by the president and president elect; and
2. To plan and coordinate the Texas Social at the annual conference of The Council for Exceptional Children.

The powers and duties of the **Secretary** shall be:

1. To keep a careful record of the proceedings of each meeting of the Executive Board and the Delegate Assembly;
2. To carry on correspondence as necessary for the operation of the unit;
3. To assume custody of all records except those specifically assigned to others;
4. To keep accurate lists of the Executive Board, the Delegate Assembly, and committee members;
5. To have available copies of the Constitution and Bylaws, and minutes of all meetings of committees, assemblies, and conventions; and
6. To transfer all records to the new secretary at the time of installation.

The powers and duties of the **Treasurer** shall be:

1. To serve as custodian of the funds of The Texas Council for Exceptional Children;
2. To pay out money for expenses approved by the Executive Board and on authorization of the president;
3. To make an annual report of the financial status of the Texas Council for Exceptional Children to the Executive Board and at the annual business meeting;
4. To prepare and submit an annual budget for approval by the Executive Board;
5. To submit record of all monies collected and expended to the accounting firm/bookkeeper for auditing; and
6. To transfer all monies and records to the new treasurer within 15 days after installation.

2008-09 TCEC AWARDS AND APPLICATIONS

By Dr. Colleen Reutebuch, Member Services Chair

The 2008—09 TCEC awards season is upon us. The awards ceremony, which will take place during the 2009 TCEC Conference luncheon in Irving, provides a forum to honor the many achievements of outstanding members efforts to share their times and talents in the field of special education. Whether a budding researcher or a seasoned professional, there is an award befitting exemplary service. If you know of a deserving TCEC member and teacher educator, classroom teacher, or school practitioner, please take the time to submit a nomination and/or application. Individuals can self-nominate. The TCEC Board also recognizes student chapter contributions in the following areas: membership growth, organization of regional conferences, workshop presentations, state program participation, service at the national or state level of CEC, contributing articles to the TCEC Newsletter, service to individuals with disabilities, and new or innovative contributions. Additionally, an award is presented annually to the local chapter with the highest percentage of its members pre-registered for the annual state TCEC Conference. 2008-09 awards include:

Outstanding Professional Award This award recognizes an outstanding TCEC member who contributes to the special education field by being an exemplary professional who serves in an educational capacity other than a classroom teacher (e.g., diagnostician, therapist, administrator, etc.). This award can recognize a single outstanding achievement or continued service over a period of time. The award recipient will receive a complimentary registration to the current year's TCEC conference.

Teacher Educator Award This award was established to recognize a TCEC member who contributes to the special education field as an outstanding Teacher Educator in special education. This award can recognize a single outstanding achievement or continued service over a period of time. The award recipient will receive a complimentary registration to the current year's TCEC conference.

Charlotte Lewis Award This award is presented annually to the local chapter with the highest percentage of its members pre-registered for the annual state TCEC Conference. The winning chapter will receive a one complimentary registration for the following year's TCEC Conference and an award certificate. There is no application for this award.

Super Chapter Awards Two awards are offered annually to chapters that have made outstanding contributions in two or more of the following areas: membership growth, organization of regional conferences, workshop presentations, state program participation, service at the national or state level of CEC, contributing articles to the TCEC Newsletter, service to individuals with disabilities, and new or innovative contributions. The awards include \$200 for first place and \$125 for second place. Each chapter will also receive a certificate.

Chapter Excellence Awards Two chapter excellence awards of \$50 each are offered to chapters excelling in one of the areas listed above for Super Chapter Award consideration.

Teacher of the Year Award The Texas Council for Exceptional Teacher Award recognizes a CEC member who currently provides direct services to students with exceptionalities, and who is an outstanding member of the profession whose work exemplifies the best of teaching in special education. The work of this recognized teacher reflects significant educational success for students, continued professional development, and the highest standards of educational quality.

First Year Promising Teacher of the Year Award This award is offered for a promising first year teacher in the field of special education. The nominee must be a member of TCEC. The awardees will receive a complimentary registration to the current year's TCEC conference and an award certificate.

Research Incentive Award Annually the TCEC Research Committee seeks applications from CEC members for a \$500.00 grant to help fund a research proposal of potential benefit to exceptional children and/or adults. The recipient of the award will be asked to share the results of the research with the TCEC membership during the following year's TCEC annual conference.

AWARDS CONTINUED

Kathleen Varner Service Award The Kathleen Varner Service Award was established in 1985 in honor of a distinguished past president of TCEC. Kathleen Varner made outstanding contributions to the welfare of exceptional individuals throughout her long career. The Kathleen Varner Service Award is presented to people who have made similar contributions. Recipients must be TCEC members and have demonstrated superior service to the special education profession and to TCEC. This award can recognize a single outstanding achievement or continued service over a period of time on the behalf of individuals with disabilities within the special education profession. The award is presented in years when a worthy recipient is selected from among nominations from the TCEC Board members.

Detailed descriptions and applications for all awards are found at www.tcecweb.org. All completed applications should be sent as email attachments by June 1, 2009 to Colleen Reutebuch at creutebuch@gmail.com.

OTHER MEMBER SERVICES NEWS

Do you know what chapter you belong to? Many members are unaware of this information. When you join CEC you must provide the chapter number that you are affiliated with or want to be affiliated with. For members who do not provide a chapter number, CEC uses a computer program that assigns you on the basis on your zip code to an established chapter. Most notably, this is the largest Texas Chapter, #100 which represents the Houston area. Don't know what chapter number you are assigned to or want to be assigned to a chapter which is in your local vicinity, I can help. Please contact me at creutebuch@gmail.com. Your assignment to a chapter in your local vicinity is important for many reasons. First of all, local chapters are meant to serve you and share your voice and vision about the field of special education with the TCEC Board and with our national organization. Rebated membership funds are also shared with chapters based on the number of active members assigned to chapters and rebated amounts are dependent upon your chapter assignment. What if you do not have an established chapter in your area? This is another area where the Texas Member Services Committee can assist you, whether in locating an adjacent chapter your area or helping you to establish a chapter, we are here to help grow our organization. Please let us know how to assist you!

MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS

The Member Services Committee is charged with growing our Texas CEC membership. Additionally, this committee oversees the yearly awards and applications that are presented at the annual TCEC conference. I would like to thank Dr. Richard Evans, Angelo State University and Texas Chapter and Sherry Bell, University of Texas—Tyler Chapter #337 for their willingness to serve on this committee and a special thanks to the TCEC Board for their support of this committees' efforts.

SUCCESS STORY

They Said He Couldn't do It... by Cynthia Wheat



Adrian is a winner! He is a twelve year old 6th grader looking forward to future opportunities. He wants to be a lawyer when he grows up. With adequate school programs and resources, Adrian will accomplish his goals and his dreams.

motor skills. As a member of Softball for Physically Challenged Children, Adrian demonstrates his athletic abilities. He recently won a speech competition about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and went on to compete in the DISD district finals. I had the pleasure of teaching Adrian who was a writer for the school Journalist club.

Adrian's educational journey has been supported by federal funding made possible through IDEA. This legislation requires and provides school funding for programs, resources, and assistive devices that help students with disabilities. Adrian's abilities have improved with services provided through occupational and speech therapists. He has received assistive technology in writing, vision, and talking, which help him to become capable and self competent. Without federal funding through IDEA, many students just like Adrian would lose valuable opportunities to learn, to grow, and to achieve their dreams.

Adrian's parents received discouraging news when he was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy as an infant. His mom was told that he wouldn't talk or walk. They didn't tell Adrian that, and if they did, he would've defied them. With his parents and teachers focusing on what he could do, Adrian has accomplished many things. He loves music. His abilities surfaced when he was given keyboards that helped him with dexterity and fine

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We invite contributions to our newsletter from the TCEC members. Please send your written contribution to newsletter Co-Chairs, Randy Seevers (seevers@uhcl.edu) or Joan Green (jgreen@alvinisd.net). We would love to hear about your success stories or lessons learned.

