



AN ALLY FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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. National 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, and that’s why National PTA fights to ensure all children, including those with special needs, have access to an optimum learning environment.

THE DATA

1 in 16 students have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for learning disabilities ^[1]

Only **18** states set the same long-term goals for students with disabilities as their non-disabled peers, which can negatively impact students with disabilities and ultimately widen the achievement gap between student subgroups ^[2]

Only **10** states have detailed descriptions in their state education plan of interventions to support students with disabilities ^[2]

Congress has committed to provide **40%** of the cost to educate children with disabilities under IDEA, however federal funding has only covered **16%** of that cost ^[3]

PTI Centers touched almost **one million** parents, students with disabilities, and professionals through trainings, one on one support and online resources ^[4]

WE ADVOCATE TO

- 
 Incorporate PTA’s National Standards for Family-School Partnerships as a model for family engagement in special education programs
- 
 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
- 
 Engage parents and families in the development and implementation of their child’s individualized education program (IEP) and 504 plan
- 
 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

VOICE FROM THE FIELD

For years, Yvonne Johnson had grown increasingly concerned about the levels of funding the state of Delaware provided for special education students. Early diagnoses for children with special needs, specifically for learning disabilities, had risen steadily over the years, and while the state provided extra special education funding to local school districts for students in fourth through 12th grade, it did not provide additional funding for students in Kindergarten through third grade.

Yvonne decided to **take action** by working with local legislators to draft a bill to increase special education funding for these students. She worked with Delaware PTA to create an advocacy campaign to increase support for the bill, developing social media posts, writing letters, drafting action alerts and providing information to local PTAs about the need to support Delaware's youngest learners.

In spring 2018, Yvonne and other Delaware PTA advocates hosted a rally on the steps of the state capitol and invited legislative leaders to join them to show their support. As a result of **Yvonne and other advocates' actions, the Delaware state legislature voted to include more funding for special education support services for students in Kindergarten through third grade in the state budget.**



Yvonne Johnson
Delaware PTA

PARENT TRAINING INFORMATION CENTERS

Parent Training Information (PTI) Centers are a program created by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that provide training, information and support to parents who have a child with special needs. There is a PTI Center in each state and over 100 PTI Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) nationwide. PTI Centers help parents navigate their child's Individual Education Program (IEP), as well as provide support in obtaining appropriate information about the types and quality of programs, services and resources for children with disabilities both in school and at home.



^[1] Horowitz, S. H., Rawe, J., & Whittaker, M. C. (2017). [The State of Learning Disabilities: Understanding the 1 in 5](#). New York: National Center for Learning Disabilities.

^[2] National Center for Learning Disabilities. (2018). [Assessing ESSA: Missed Opportunities for Students with Disabilities](#). New York, NY.

^[3] Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). (2017). [Medicaid Helps Schools Help Children](#). Washington, DC.

^[4] [A Year in the Life: Parent Centers in Action](#). (2018). Newark, NJ.