

Special Education Legislative Summit



Welcome!



Angie Jasper, CEC



Kevin Rubenstein, CASE

SELS Planning Committee

- Angie Balsley
- Brigid Bright
- Angie Jasper
- Myrna Mandlawitz
- Kindel Mason
- Kevin Rubenstein
- Chad Rummel
- Kuna Tavalin
- Laurie VanderPloeg
- Phyllis Wolfram
- Mitch Yell

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Council for Exceptional Children



Doctoral Student

Undergraduate Students

First Time Participant

First Time You Have Participated in the Summit

Participated in the Summit before

WIFI



Network: Westin_Conference

Password: westinalex

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Connect & Share with CEC



@CECMembership



@cec_headquarters



/CECHQ

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@casecec



@case.cec



/CASECEC



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Let's Go Learn

Tools for Writing Truly Individualized IEPs



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RELAY



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Washington Update

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Myrna R. Mandlawitz, CASE



Kuna Tavalin, CEC

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Congress in Context

What to Expect on Hill Day

What IS Congress?



- 535 small businesses!
- No “typical” congressional office.
- What are those “businesses” selling?
(...and are you buying?)
- How’s the customer service?

Truth: Elections Always on the Horizon

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- Reelection: Always running or getting ready to run!
 - Reps: Every two years.
 - Senators: Every six years.
- Presidential elections next year – November 2024!
 - All 435 House seats;
 - 35 Senate seats (20 D; 10 R; 3 I).
 - Control of both bodies hangs in the balance.
- To effect change means to stay in office...so “running” affects all actions!

How Business Gets Done

Congress often legislates by anecdote.

- Compelling stories prompt action.
- #HearOurEdStories.

MoC need to hear from “home.”

- Power of constituency.
- Relevance to their electorate.

Congressional offices run by small staffs.

- They have smarts, power & influence, but not *your* expertise!

How Close to Education Policy is your MoC?

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- Is your Representative or Senator on –
 - House Education and the Workforce Committee?
 - Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee?
 - Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee (House or Senate) or full Appropriations Committee?
- Extra credit if Representative/Senator is chair or ranking member!



My MoC is Already a Supporter... Do we need to meet?

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- **Yes!**
 - *If you're not at the table, you're probably on the menu.*
 - **Do** say “Thanks” and “Keep up the good work!” Let the staffer know you appreciate the office actions. The more praise for “good acts,” better the chance of “behavior” continuing!
 - **Don't** target other members who don't represent you. They don't care what “non-constituents” have to say!

Who Cares About Staff? You do!

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Staff members
have....



Direct
access to
legislators.



Their bosses'
trust.



Knowledge
(sometimes!)
on issue
areas.



INFLUENCE
over
legislators'
decisions and
actions!

When meeting with staff...

Be professional, transparent, reasonable, respectful, & genuine!

Connect dots between issue and state/district.

- Relevance for the MoC?
- Relevance to constituents?

Help staff understand issue & how Congress's actions matter and affect lives.

- Don't overestimate what they know.
- Don't underestimate their influence!

If you don't know the "A" to a "Q," say so...and then offer to get the info and follow up!

Things to avoid in meetings



Being intentionally misleading.



Not researching MoC and community.



Making assumptions based on “hearsay” about staff or MoC.



Referring to MoC by first name (unless you really know them), even if staff does.



Droning on too long....!

Takeaways

Getting to know staff can be very beneficial.

- Gate keepers to power structure.
- Capacity to influence decisions.

You can develop relationships with Congress from home.

- Work with district/state staff.
- Meet with DC staff when they're "at home."

This visit to DC is just ONE STEP in a long advocacy adventure!

Know before you go...

- Legislator's prior record?
- Committee assignments?
- Is your issue favored by constituents? By the legislator?
- Helpful personal information?
- Other legislators who can influence their decision?
- "Opposition" arguments?



Helpful terminology

Staff *will* jargonize....so here's a handy list:

- **Authorization:** Enacting a program into existence.
- **Appropriation:** Funding for authorized programs.
- **Mark-up:** Subcommittee/committee meets to debate, amend, vote on a bill before it moves to the floor.
- **Discretionary Spending:** Government functions funded through annual appropriations (Defense & NDD).
- **Mandatory Spending:** “Entitlement” or nondiscretionary spending; no annual spending ceiling.

Continued...

- *Fiscal Year*: For feds = Oct. 1 – Sept. 30.
- ***Continuing Resolution***: Stop-gap funding bill to keep government operating....while Congress figures out appropriations!
- ***Government shutdown***: when Congress lets Federal spending for one or more Agency lapse.
- ***Omnibus***: a measure that includes many or all appropriations bills.
- Bill release: when a bill becomes available to the public.

Tips for a high-impact meeting

Prepare a concise message.

- Make sure they get WHO you are and WHAT you do!
- Don't worry about hitting every point

Practice your message, so you don't have to read it...but notes are fine!

Don't just talk...be a good listener, too!

No 300-page reports. 1-2 page summaries are great.

Your #1 goal: Become the "go-to" person on special education!

Best practices for logistics

Time your arrival: More now than ever!

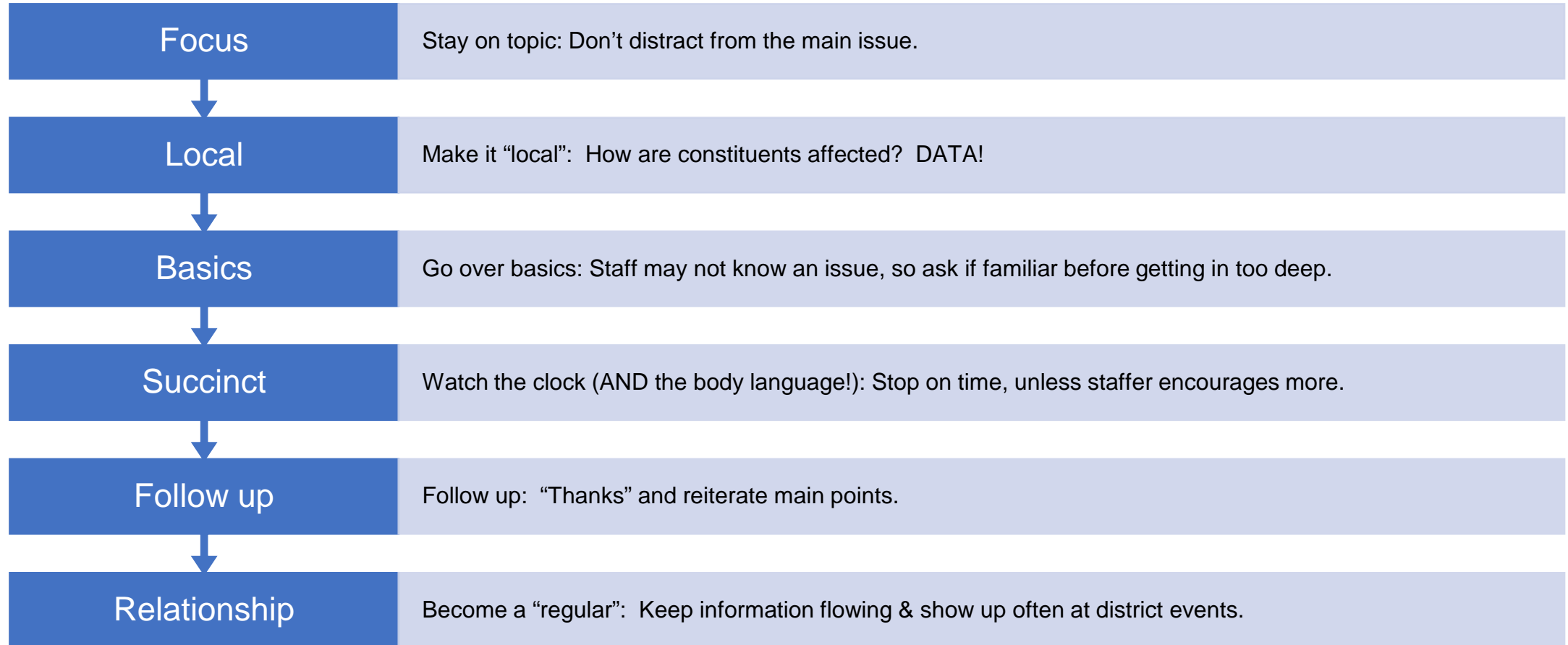
Meeting length: 10-30 minutes (Ask: “How much time will we have?”)

Anticipate last-minute changes: Staff schedules are fluid...go with the flow!

*Be patient, courteous, respectful...*even if they aren't! No arguing!

Influence the influencer. Remember, staff directly advise the member...and you're a constituent!

To sum it up...



Recent Congressional action

Fiscal Responsibility Act

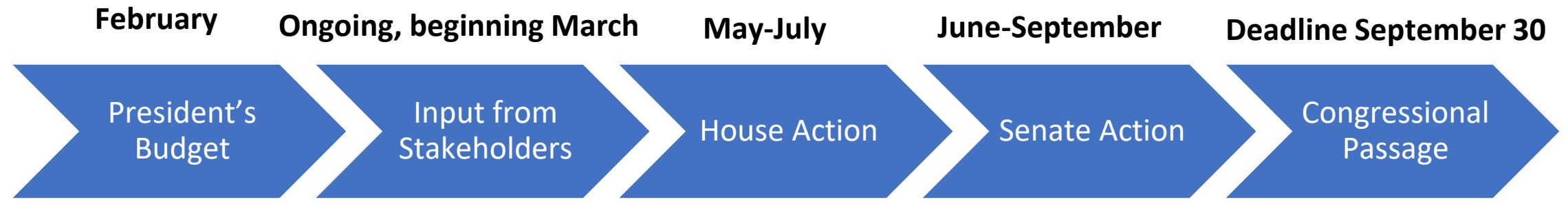
- Signed into law June 3
- Suspends debt limit until January 2025
- Freezes Federal discretionary spending for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024
- Allows for a 1% increase for FY 2025

Parents Bill of Rights

- Passed in House only, part of Republican agenda
- $\frac{2}{3}$ of Republicans voted for an amendment to defund ED

Pending action: appropriations

Typical Appropriations Cycle



Where we are today:

- Budget Released March 9
- House action anticipated in July
- Senate TBD

What Congress is talking about

Youth mental health:

- Surgeon general's declaration of youth mental health crisis
- Social media, COVID, bullying, school shootings, youth suicide rates

Personnel shortages:

- Amplified by the pandemic
- Politicization of school board meetings, etc. making it worse
- Chairman Sanders Town Hall

Culture War issues

- Parental rights/choice
- Trans students (sports, restrooms)
- Impacts of school closures

Outlook for the year

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- Appropriations the biggest “must-do”
- Education Sciences Reform Act reauthorization
- Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act reauthorization

Questions?



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Glenna Wright-Gallo

Assistant Secretary

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services



Raise the Bar: Lead the World

ACHIEVE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- Accelerate learning for every student
- Deliver a comprehensive and rigorous education for every student

BOLDLY IMPROVE LEARNING CONDITIONS

- Eliminate the educator shortage for every school
- Invest in every student's mental health and well being

CREATE PATHWAYS FOR GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

- Ensure every student has a pathway to college and a career
- Provide every student with a pathway to multilingualism

OSERS Mission

IDEA

ESSA

WIOA

Section
504

Rehab
Act

To **improve** early childhood, education, and employment **outcomes** and **raise expectations** for all people with disabilities, their families, their communities, and the nation



OSERS Priorities

1. Demonstrate Instructional Leadership: Focus on Learning Through Effective Instruction and Intervention
2. Capitalize on Opportunities for Strategic Investments to Support Learning

Remedy
Critical Staffing
Shortages

Amplify
Evidence-Based
Instruction and
Intervention

Expand
Use of Inclusive
Technology

Invest
in Improved
Student
Outcomes

Persistent Disparities & Inequities

- ▶ Evaluation/eligibility delays and outcomes
- ▶ More restrictive placements
- ▶ Increased use of restraint and seclusion
- ▶ Increased use of discipline
- ▶ Lack of diverse and prepared personnel in schools
- ▶ Lower expectations
- ▶ Lower graduation rates
- ▶ Lower post-school outcomes
- ▶ Less access to services, including mental health

Improve Outcomes & Raise Expectations

**How
do our
current actions
demonstrate...**

Our commitment
and
sense of urgency
to improve outcomes
and raise expectations?

Remedy Critical Staffing Shortages

Need for immediate action to remedy the critical shortage of education practitioners who support children and youth with disabilities

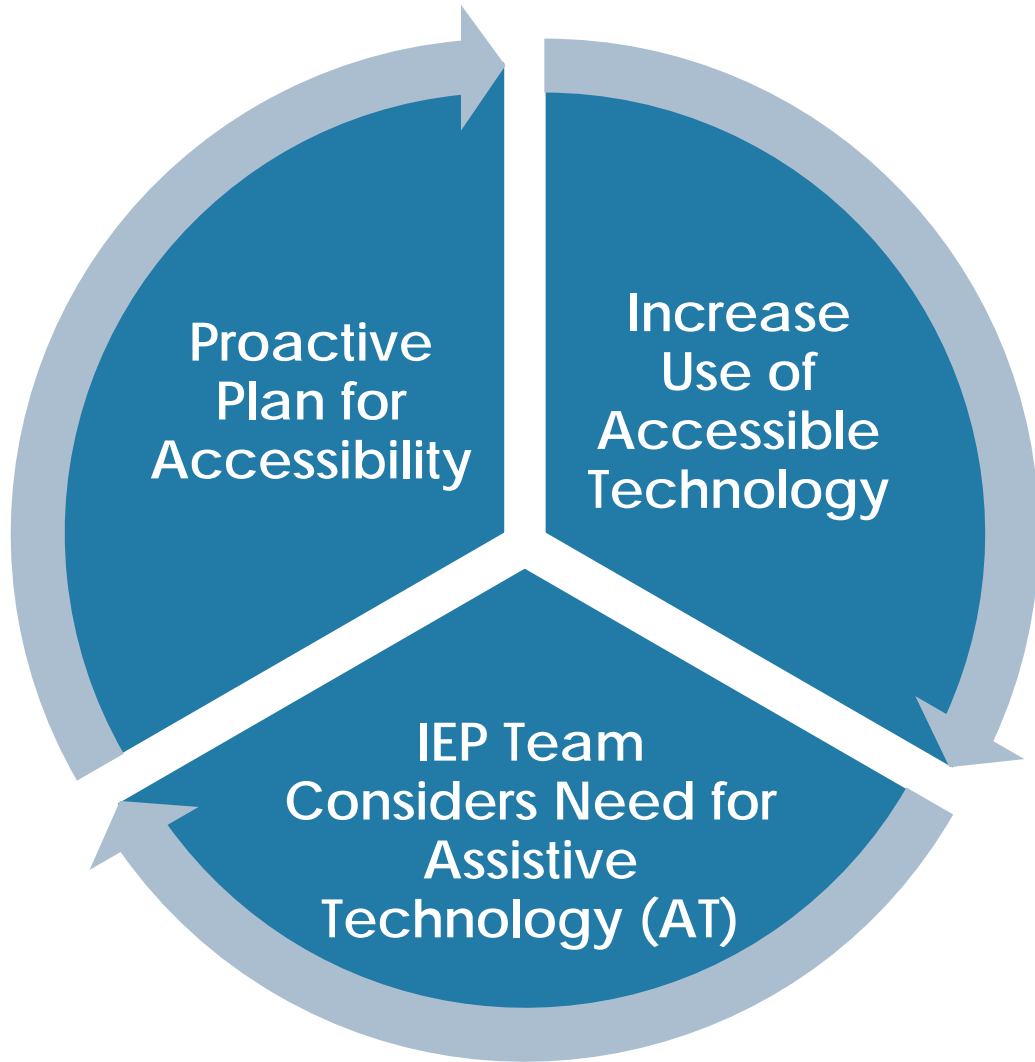
- Attract:** Open and affordable pipeline with recruitment strategies designed for diverse populations who reflect students and communities
- Prepare:** In addition to traditional preparation programs, increase the number of registered apprenticeships and alternative routes, and prepare educators to work together
- Retain:** Create career pathways with competitive compensation that support ongoing learning and application of evidence-based programs and instruction, advancement, and mentoring/coaching

Amplify Evidence-Based Instruction

Ensure every child and youth with a disability has access to:

1. Highly skilled personnel who reflect them and their communities; work collaboratively with families, and have high expectations and beliefs
2. Safe classrooms and workplaces (physically and emotionally)
3. Authentic interactions with nondisabled peers
4. The same settings that nondisabled peers do, with additional special education and related service supports
5. Evidence-based instruction supporting progress in grade-level core standards, as well as IEP goals
6. Long term, coordinated planning that leads them to post-school success

Expand Use of Inclusive Technology



Applying learning from the pandemic:

- ▶ How do we prepare students with disabilities to continue learning in a variety of online environments (e.g., full-time, hybrid, infrequent) and for a variety of reasons (e.g., general/special education instruction, supplemental, remediation, and preparation for remote work opportunities)?
- ▶ How are you deploying resources to support student learning?
 - Self-assessment of status quo and identifying assistive and accessible instructional technology needs
 - Development and dissemination of guidance and TA on inclusive technology practices
 - Expanding availability and use of accessible technology at all ages and subjects

Invest in Improved Outcomes

- State-level activities/investments aligned with priorities that deliver improved outcomes
- Braiding of IDEA funds with other federal/state funds, where allowable, to reduce duplication of services, and accessing all available resources (e.g., Medicaid, general education funds)
- Staffing investments and decisions to address immediate needs and long-term plans
- Coordination across agencies and departments:
 - Aligned PD (to support priorities) with general educators and school/district leaders, as well as special educators
 - Leverage Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) for Pre-ETS, technology, and post-school planning
 - Engage partners in planning and delivery (e.g., families, labor organizations, advocates, and professional associations)

**Are your
current
investments
improving
outcomes?**

What Will It Take?

- ▶ Telling our story, along with sharing data that demonstrate impact
- ▶ True high expectations reflected in our actions (commitment and priority-focused)
- ▶ Instructional leadership focused on improving outcomes (instruction-driven and supported by strategic investments and compliance/accountability)
- ▶ Acknowledgement of the interconnecting supports that can be leveraged differently (increase, diversify, common mission)
- ▶ Engage partners, support expansion on who is considered “an expert” on students with disabilities, and expect contributions
- ▶ Cycle of continuous improvement (Plan, Do, Study, Act)

“Do the best you can until you
know better.

Then when you know better,
do better.”

Maya Angelou

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CEC Impact Award

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Joan McLaughlin

Wrap-Up/Next Day



Angie Jasper, CEC



Kevin Rubenstein, CASE

Wrap-Up/Next Day

Upcoming:

- 6:00 pm Reception
- 8:30 – 9:15 am Breakfast
- 9:15 am Kickoff
- 9:30 am Mental Health
- 11:00 am Educator Shortage
- 1:15 pm Appropriations

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