



Washington

wants to know



Minority Students: Are Too Many Placed In Special Education?

(NAPSA)—Look at many of our special education classes, and you will notice something different—a lot of students are from diverse backgrounds. High numbers of African-American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian students are placed in classes for the learning disabled, educable mentally handicapped and emotionally disturbed.

According to a recent Harvard study, African-American children are almost three times as likely as Caucasian children to be identified as mentally retarded.

The Council for Exceptional Children, along with other groups, has long been concerned about this phenomenon. CEC is also concerned about the low numbers of students from diverse backgrounds who are assigned to gifted and talented programs.

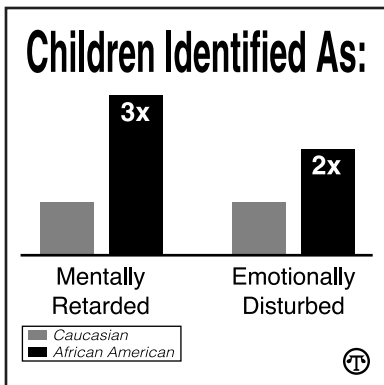
“To eliminate the inappropriate placement of children from diverse backgrounds in special education is of utmost importance,” says Nancy D. Safer, CEC’s executive director. “To ensure this practice does not continue, we must look at general and special education practices as well as provide funding for strategies to help at-risk students in early childhood.”

To eliminate misplacement of minority children in special education, CEC recommends:

- Implement intervention strategies for at-risk students in general education classes. This should prevent students from diverse backgrounds from being inappropriately referred to special education as well as their misclassification as disabled.

- Ensure teachers use culturally sensitive materials and instructional strategies.

- Prepare, recruit and retain qualified teachers from culturally



THE NUMBERS SAY YES: A recent Harvard study showed that African-American children were almost three times as likely as Caucasian children to be identified as mentally retarded, two times as likely to be identified as emotionally disturbed.

diverse groups.

- Provide full funding for high-quality early childhood intervention programs that focus on children who are at-risk, such as Head Start.

CEC also recommends that Congress implement these recommendations in the coming year as part of its reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the law affecting special education. CEC has also called for the U.S. Department of Education to create a task force to study misplacement of minority students in special education, recommend ways to improve educational practice, and disseminate the information.

CEC is the largest professional organization committed to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities. For more information about this issue, visit www.cec.sped.org.