



DCASE

District of Columbia
Association for Special Education

An Important Message About Nonpublic Special Education

A lot of discussion, often heated, swirls around **nonpublic special education** for students who live in the District of Columbia. But the discussion should always start from this basic premise:

**The goal of special education is to maximize success
for each and every child to their fullest potential.**

The member schools of the **District of Columbia Association for Special Education (DCASE)** want to highlight some important ideas about the nonpublic special education and charter schools that serve students with disabilities from DC.

These **six key points** are vital to the future of special education in the District of Columbia and must make part of the ongoing conversation around education reform:

1 Nonpublic schools are vital to the fulfillment of IDEA, the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. IDEA mandates a "continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services." Nonpublic schools are one component in that continuum, and fulfill a unique and essential role in meeting students' particular educational needs.

2 Nonpublic schools are uniquely equipped to provide the specific, multi-disciplinary, frequently intensive resources that students with special needs require. The scope and depth of expertise here provides an economically practical solution to delivering complex specialized, integrated programming which goes beyond academic education and encompasses the social and emotional well-being of each child. In addition to skilled, highly-trained teachers and related service providers, schools are staffed to provide other critical services such as a behavior program, crisis management, or special medical attention.

3 Effective specialized and intensive education and remediation is expensive, but nonpublic schools deliver the mandated services in a way that is cost-effective, efficient, and beneficial to the students. These are not elite private schools; they are highly-regarded, financially responsible providers of critically-needed special education services.

4 LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) is different for every child, and as outlined in IDEA, nonpublic schools work closely with education professionals, families, and DC school officials to facilitate each child's progress toward appropriate placement in increasingly less restrictive environments. For some children, nonpublic settings may be the only option; for others, nonpublic education may be the key to returning students to their neighborhood schools.

5 Partnering is powerful. DCASE has reached out to DCPS to create partnerships that can bring the highly-regarded expertise and experience of our members to the most urgent DCPS agendas. We demonstrated the effectiveness of such partnerships with our recently-completed *Assessment Project*, solving one of the central issues in the Blackman-Jones Consent Decree—the backlog of assessments resulting in or from due process complaints. Our goal is to implement other targeted programs to support the educational success of DC students with special needs.

6 DCASE schools represent over 500 years of combined service to children, with an incredible scope and depth of knowledge, experience, and perspective. We have served thousands of students from throughout DC, and are proud of our consistent and notable accomplishments for the children we serve.

Please contact us if you have any questions.