

## **INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 3, 2013

- WHEREAS,** In 2011-12, 686,352 children and youth with special needs were served in California schools; and in order to receive federal funds, states must develop and implement policies that assure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities; and
- WHEREAS,** The California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) was put in place to improve student achievement in public high schools to ensure that students who graduate from high school can demonstrate grade-level competency in reading, writing, and mathematics, and in 2009-10, the education code was modified to allow students with special needs who have or will satisfy all other graduation requirements to be exempt from the CAHSEE requirement to receive their diploma; and
- WHEREAS,** Children with special needs are often bullied, socially isolated, and face challenges in their school communities, leading to exclusion from school activities; such as high school graduation ceremonies, information sharing, and school and community involvement; and
- WHEREAS,** The cultural environment and social setting of schools play an integral part in creating an inclusive learning environment which is the least restrictive for students with special needs; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That California State PTA, its units, councils, and districts shall develop programs and resources to help educate the community about the educational system that impacts families and students with special needs in order to build inclusive communities; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That California State PTA, its units, councils, and districts actively advocate and work with their local school boards and school district to adopt policies allowing students with special needs to receive a diploma and be included in graduation activities if they have received all required graduation credits; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That California State PTA, its units, councils, and districts encourage and work with the entire school community to include families, children, and youth with special needs to participate in the school and community activities where their child attends school; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That California State PTA, its units, councils, and districts work with their local school districts to research the programs which are most inclusive and best serve students with special needs in their schools and communities and advocate for their implementation.

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## **Inclusive Schools Build Better Communities**

### **BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

In 1975, PL 94-142 passed giving all children access to free appropriate public education, currently, called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), opening the academic world to children with special needs\*. However, inclusion of children with special needs remains difficult. In 1999, California implemented the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to improve literary and mathematical literacy, often preventing the receipt of a diploma or participation in graduation activities for students with special needs.

Children and youth, including those with special needs, who are involved and participate in their schools and communities strengthen and build relationships between students, guardians, caregivers and their schools. California State PTA, its units, councils and districts speak for all children and have the leadership ability to build positive, inclusive futures for all students.

\*Special needs definition from California State PTA Standing Rules 8.15

Special needs encompass physical and/or mental impairments, including but not limited to physical disabilities, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, or emotional disorders, that substantially limit one or more major life activities. Special needs also includes the unique needs of gifted children.