

**PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON
EXCELLENCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**OSEP TASK FORCE
APRIL 26, 2002 // WASHINGTON, DC**

**ALAN COULTER
OPENING REMARKS**

GOOD MORNING. I AM ALAN COULTER. I CHAIR THE TASK FORCE ON THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS, WHICH IS ONE OF SEVERAL TASK FORCES OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION. I WELCOME YOU TO TODAY'S HEARING.

THE FOCUS OF OUR HEARING IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS BY THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS, OR "O-SEP" AS IT IS COMMONLY CALLED.

OSEP IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY ENTITY FOR IMPLEMENTING THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT. WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT THIS OFFICE IS EQUIPPED TO RESPOND TO THE MANY CHALLENGES ITS FACES. IN DOING SO, WE CAN HELP ENSURE THAT NO CHILD IS LEFT BEHIND.

BEFORE WE BEGIN OUR HEARING, I WOULD LIKE TO BRIEFLY PROVIDE YOU WITH BACKGROUND ABOUT THE COMMISSION.

PRESIDENT BUSH ESTABLISHED THE COMMISSION LAST OCTOBER TO COLLECT INFORMATION AND TO STUDY ISSUES RELATED TO FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS. THE COMMISSION'S GOAL IS TO RECOMMEND POLICIES TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SO THAT NO CHILD WILL BE LEFT BEHIND.

OUR WORK IS *NOT* DESIGNED TO REPLACE THE CONGRESSIONAL REAUTHORIZATION OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT. RATHER, THE REPORT WE PRODUCE AND ISSUE THIS SUMMER WILL NOT ONLY PROVIDE VITAL INPUT INTO THE REAUTHORIZATION PROCESS, BUT ALSO INTO THE NATIONAL DEBATE ON HOW BEST TO EDUCATE ALL CHILDREN.

THE COMMISSION’S EXAMINATION OF OSEP IS PART OF ITS EXPANSIVE REVIEW OF ALL FACETS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION. OVER THE PAST TWO MONTHS, THE COMMISSION AND ITS TASK FORCES HAVE HELD HEARINGS IN HOUSTON, DENVER, DES MOINES, LOS ANGELES, CORAL GABLES, NEW YORK CITY, NASHVILLE, SAN DIEGO AND WASHINGTON. THE COMMISSION HAS LOOKED AT ISSUES SUCH AS TEACHER QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, FUNDING, COST EFFECTIVENESS, PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT, IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES, RESEARCH, PAPERWORK, LITIGATION, AND NOW, FEDERAL PROGRAMS.

AS PART OF TODAY’S HEARING, THE COMMISSION WILL HEAR A VARIETY OF PERSPECTIVES ON OSEP. FOR EXAMPLE, THE COMMISSION WILL HEAR:

1. HOW STATES CAN PARTNER WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

2. HOW OSEP IS BECOMING MORE EFFECTIVE IN ITS DELIVERY OF PROGRAMS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION.
3. HOW OSEP IS IMPROVING SPECIAL EDUCATION THROUGH A FOCUS ON THE “CONSUMERS,” WHO ARE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN OF DISABILITIES.
4. HOW FEDERAL LEADERSHIP CAN HELP IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

WE WILL HEAR PRESENTATIONS FROM EXPERTS AND EDUCATORS ON THESE TOPICS. WE WILL ALSO HAVE A PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THIS AFTERNOON. WHAT WE LEARN FROM ALL THESE SOURCES WILL PROVIDE US WITH THE VALUABLE INPUT WE NEED TO DEVELOP OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE
COMMISSION. WE WILL NOW BEGIN TODAY'S
HEARING.

(END)