

# **CEC Survey of Canadian Members**

## **Executive Summary of Results**

November, 2007

### **Background**

A survey of Canadian members of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) was conducted as part of the work of the US/Canadian Workgroup. An on-line, self-administered survey was developed and posted from August 14<sup>th</sup> to September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007. All Canadian members were notified by e-mail or postcard if CEC Headquarters did not have a contact e-mail address. A second e-mail blast was sent to Canadian members on September 5<sup>th</sup> as a reminder, encouraging them to complete the survey if they had not done so already. Two hundred eighty-four (284) members out of a total 1128 members responded resulting in a 25% response rate within a four week period. All responses were voluntary.

The Workgroup recognizes that the members who responded to the survey without prompting may not be representative of all members and the data collected may be biased towards member satisfaction, member understanding of the association's objectives, and the ability to participate in the association's governance. The Workgroup also acknowledges that the lower the response rate, the greater the possible effect of response bias. Nonetheless, it was felt that the 25% response rate by its Canadian constituents was significant enough to use as a base for the Workgroup study.

### **Membership Profile**

Twenty-five percent (25.2%) of respondents to the survey have been CEC members for 4 to 10 years while almost forty percent (35.9%) of respondents have been CEC members for more than 10 years. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the respondents are relatively new members having had their membership for three years or less. It should be noted that 315 members from New Brunswick joined CEC at the end of July, 2007 and 40 of these new members responded to the survey.

The professional profile of the respondents indicated that 45.2% were special education teachers and/or resource teachers while 30% were district level special education administrators or consultants. School administrators represented 8% of the respondents and regular classroom teachers represented only 4.2% of the respondents. Of significance was the low representation by teacher educators or college/university faculty (6.3%) and undergraduate or graduate student members (3%) compared to the 2006 CEC Membership Survey where 15% of the respondents were teacher educators or university/college faculty and 14% were undergraduate or graduate students. A large majority of the respondents indicated they worked on behalf of school aged students (72.7% elementary and 58.2% secondary) while 26.6% of the respondents work on behalf of children from birth to school-age. A very small percentage of respondents indicated they worked on behalf of students in post secondary institutions (8.9%). Eight percent of the respondents indicated that they work in other professions (8.2%).

More than one half (53%) of the respondents work in urban areas while the rest work in suburban (24.2%) or rural (22.8%) areas. Almost fifty-eight percent (57.7%) of the respondents consider CEC their primary professional membership organization.

Also of interest to the Workgroup is the breakdown of respondents by province/territory. The number of responses from individual provinces/territories is delineated below:

### Survey Results ~ Breakdown by Province/Territory

Province/Territory	# of CEC Members	Respondents to Survey	Province/Territory	# of CEC Members	Respondents to Survey
British Columbia	151	32	Newfoundland	5	1
Alberta	74	19	Nova Scotia	16	8
Saskatchewan	52	24	Prince Edward Island	0	0
Manitoba	118	41	Northwest Territories	0	0
Ontario	463	117	Yukon Territories	0	0
Quebec	33	2	Nunavut	1	?
New Brunswick	315	40	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1128</b>	<b>284</b>

### Reasons for Continuing Membership in CEC

Respondents were provided with a list of 28 possible reasons for continuing their membership in CEC and were asked to rate each on a scale of 1-not very important to 5-very important. The list of activities included advocacy at various levels of government and among various constituencies; opportunities to attend activities and to network; access to information, products and services; access to publications and newsletters; and supporting research, evidence-based practice, teacher preparation and education.

*Accessing the latest information in special education* was the highest-rated reason for continuing membership. The average score of 4.60 on the 5-point scale led the list. It was followed closely with *developing professional knowledge and skills* and *improving teacher preparation and teacher training in special education*, both scoring 4.58. Over 90% of the respondents rated these three reasons as important to very important. Over 80% of the respondents rated another 6 reasons as important to very important with the average scores tightly clustered between 4.43 and 4.20. Below are the top reasons Canadian members continue their membership, listed in order of average score:

- Accessing the latest information in special education (4.60)
- Developing professional knowledge and skills (4.58)
- Improving teacher preparation and teacher training in special education (4.58)
- Supporting research in special education (4.43)
- Supporting improvement of special education teaching conditions (4.40)
- Supporting advancement of evidence-based practice (4.37)
- Accessing Canadian content in CEC journals and publications (4.24)
- Receiving the journal, *Teaching Exceptional Children* (4.20)
- Supporting provincial advocacy for policy, legislation and governmental action (4.20)

There was clear evidence that respondents valued support on issues related to policy, legislation and governmental action at a provincial level more than at a national level. A similar trend emerged with regard to participation in programs and activities. Respondents indicated a preference to participate in programs and activities at a provincial level more than at a local level, although they also indicated a preference to participate in local programs and activities over national programs and activities.

### What Canadian Members Want in Terms of Access to the Latest Special Education Information

Respondents were provided with a list of 9 different topics on what they value as “the latest special education information” and were asked to rate each on a scale of 1-not valued to 5-highly valued. The highest-rated topic was *Research-based practices*, scoring 4.60 on the 5-point scale. *Provincial educational issues*, *information on specific exceptionalities*, *teaching methodology*, and *assessment and evaluation* were the next 4 topics scoring 4.54, 4.49, and 4.47 and 4.45 respectively. *Canadian policy*,

*legislation and governmental information* was the lowest-rated and the only topic with an average rating below 4.00.

### **Other Comments Made By Respondents**

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were given an opportunity to share further comments or thoughts. Fifty-seven respondents (approximately 20%) commented. Comments were diverse and touched on a variety of issues such as support for provincial professional development activities, opportunities to share information among provinces, value of TEC and EC, concerns about leadership, and support for local units. However, one recurring theme was evident ~ over 25% of the respondents made reference to the lack of Canadian content and material that is relevant to Canadians and expressed a need to address this issue.

### **Conclusion**

The US/Canadian Workgroup met at CEC Headquarters from September 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007 to discuss and analyse the data from the Canadian CEC Membership Survey. Recommendations and an action plan are currently being developed as directed by the CEC Board of Directors. A final report will be prepared and presented to the CEC Board of Directors at their meeting in January, 2008.