

WICEC Newsletter

Spring 2026 Newsletter

Letter to our Members

As I write my final letter as Board President of WICEC, I find myself reflecting with deep gratitude on the past year and the incredible people who make this organization what it is.

To our Board—thank you. Your dedication, time, and unwavering commitment to our mission have made a meaningful impact. The work you do behind the scenes does not go unnoticed. Your thoughtful leadership, collaboration, and willingness to step up whenever needed have strengthened WICEC in countless ways. It has been an honor to serve alongside each of you.

This year has been one of growth, connection, and continued purpose. Together, we have supported one another, expanded our reach, and stayed grounded in the values that guide our work. These accomplishments are not the result of one person, but of a collective effort rooted in passion and care for the communities we serve.

To our members—thank you for being the heart of WICEC. Your engagement, support, and belief in our mission fuel everything we do. Whether you participated in events, shared your expertise, or simply stayed connected, you played a role in making this year a success.

Serving as your Board President has been a privilege I will always value. I am proud of what we have accomplished together and excited for the future of WICEC. I have full confidence that the organization will continue to grow and thrive with the strong foundation that has been built.

With sincere appreciation,

Becky Zingsheim
Board President, WICEC



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WICEC 2026 Yes I Can Award Recipient

Congratulations to Isabella Greene, our WICEC YES I Can award recipient in the area of Employment! Your hard work, determination, and achievements are truly inspiring. We are so proud to celebrate your success and can't wait to see all that you accomplish in the future!

WI CEC Board Election

Thank you to everyone who has completed the ballot! Results will be announced at our next Board meeting on May 19.

CEC YES I CAN RECIPIENT

Bennett Lehman was honored as a 2026 CEC Yes I Can Award recipient, recognizing his outstanding achievements as a student with exceptionalities. He was celebrated at the CEC Convention & Expo, where his determination and accomplishments were highlighted alongside other inspiring recipients.

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PUBLIC POLICY UPDATES

On April 7th, nearly 20% of all school districts in the state of Wisconsin sought a referendum to expand their financial capacity. Out of these 75 districts, 60% saw their referendum pass, while 38% failed. On the surface this may appear as a “win” for public districts, however, a closer look at the data shows that many referendums were approved by slim margins, and significant consequences were wrought for those that failed. The referendum in the Butternut School District in Ashland and Price Counties was approved by 1 vote. And in the Hustisford School District in Dodge County, the referendum failed, which will now lead to the dissolution of the district.

As practitioners and advocates for Special Education, we at the WI CEC understand that referendums, along with their passing and failing, directly impact the breadth and quality of the education that all students receive. Within this newsletter, you will be provided links to current, state-wide reporting on the reasons why districts are forced to referendums, and the consequences therein. You will also find links and articles to advocacy organizations and political-action toolkits that give you the resources to advocate for more equitable and just school funding. As teachers, advocates, administrators, and students who care deeply about an equitable and accessible education, it is up to us to speak boldly and loudly about the worth of our work – about the need for well-funded special education programs across the state.

With more referendums on the horizon this fall, staying informed is not optional—it’s essential. Use the resources provided, raise your voice, and advocate for the funding that ensures every student, especially those in special education, receives the support they deserve.

Types of Referendums:

1. **Recurring Referendum:** permanently places funds in the district to add to the revenue base of the school district.
2. **Non-recurring Referendum:** temporarily places funds in place to increase the revenue limit of the school district, typically for a finite period of time. For example, a 2% property tax increase for 5 years. Districts may seek additional referenda in future years

State Reporting / Studies:

- [What You Should Know Before Voting on Any School Referendum](#), The Post-Crescent by Rebecca Loroff
- [Voters Approve Majority of Referendums Even as “Retry” Efforts Increase](#), Wisconsin Policy Forum
- [Wisconsinites Voted on 75 School Referendums Tuesday, Most Races Decided by Small Margins](#) Wisconsin Public Radio by Steph Conquest-Ware
- [Thriving Public Schools Require Funding Fairness](#), Wisconsin Public Education Network
- [Wisconsin School Districts Eye Funding Change After Failed Referendums](#) WKOW by Lauryn Abozeid
- [Special Education Funding Shortfalls Forced Some School Referendums](#) Isthmus by Liam Beran
- [Most Wisconsin School Referendums Passed in April, But Support Wanes](#) Milwaukee Journal Sentinel by Kayla Huynh
- [Wisconsin’s Rural Superintendents Plea for Compromise on School Funding, Property Tax Relief](#) Wisconsin Public Radio by Corrinne Hess
- [State Special Education Funding in the Spotlight With Federal Support in Flux](#) Wisconsin Examiner, by Baylor Spears

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PUBLIC POLICY RESOURCES

Resources & Tools to Empower Your Advocacy

Advocating for equitable school funding—especially for Special Education—requires both knowledge and action. Use the resources below to stay informed, get involved, and make your voice heard.

Wisconsin Public Education Network:

- Referenda Resources
- Advocacy Toolkits



WI CEC: Redefining Advocacy: How Educators Can Influence Change



Wisconsin State Legislature: [Find Your State Representative](#)

Share Your Story: The Power of Inclusion

The Wisconsin Council for Exceptional Children (WI CEC) is actively collecting stories, memories, and testimonies from educators, students, families, and community members about the Power of Inclusion and Special Education.

Your story can help influence policy, raise awareness, and inspire change:

- Share your experience and perspective
- Submit multiple stories (one form per submission)
- Contribute audio recordings if you prefer to speak your story

To participate or submit a recording, contact Jeremy Ault at: jeremy@escuelaverde.org

👉 Submit your story here: [Google Form](#)



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WICEEC Newsletter

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CEC NEW MEMBERS

We're thrilled to welcome our newest members to the Wisconsin Council for Exceptional Children (WI CEC) community! By joining us, you've become part of a dedicated network of educators, leaders, and advocates committed to supporting individuals with exceptionalities across Wisconsin.

We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities WI CEC offers—attend professional learning events, connect with colleagues, and share your expertise. Together, we can continue to make a difference and celebrate the power of working together!

LEARNING AND NETWORKING

NEW! COMING FALL 2026




Council for
Exceptional
Children

**UnifiED
2026**

Join CEC for our first annual UnifiED, a dynamic 1.5-day experience designed to bring education professionals together around the practices that matter most. Hosted in collaboration with three Special Interest Divisions, UnifiED focuses on behavior, learning disabilities, diversity, and High-Leverage Practices (HLPs), designed to equip you with practical strategies you can apply immediately in your classroom or district.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
October 19-20, 2026

SCAN QR CODE
TO GET MORE
INFORMATION



The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is bringing its first annual UnifiED event to **Milwaukee!** This 1.5-day experience is designed for education professionals and focuses on key areas such as behavior, learning disabilities, diversity, and High-Leverage Practices (HLPs). In collaboration with three Special Interest Divisions, UnifiED aims to provide practical, classroom-ready strategies that educators can immediately apply in their schools or districts.



Click here to express your interest and receive more information.

Please see the additional training calendars linked below for more opportunities



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STUDENT CHAPTER NEWS

If you have a student chapter or you're interested in starting one, please reach out to Amira Albagshi (amira.albagshi@wsu.edu). We want to connect and support you in any way we can.

New Special Education License at Ripon College

Ripon College has introduced a new cross-categorical special education teaching license, allowing students to work with K–12 learners with diverse needs. The program can be combined with elementary education, enabling graduates to earn dual licensure in just four years.

Designed to address the growing demand for special education teachers, the program equips future educators with skills in inclusive instruction and supporting diverse learners, helping them make an immediate impact in today's classrooms.

WHY JOIN CEC?

CEC MEMBERSHIP

No matter where you are in your professional journey, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) provides the knowledge and inspiration you need to make a difference in your student's lives. From growing your expertise to accessing evidence-based resources, CEC is here to lift you up throughout your career.

CEC membership provides access to essential content that keeps you connected to the latest practice insights, research, and emerging trends in special education so you can feel confident in your abilities to support your students.

CEC Membership Benefits

Professional development you can trust:

- Discounts on books and CEC products, as well as CEC's Annual Convention & Expo
- Selection of free, member-only pre-recorded and live webinars through the CEC Learning Library
- Evidence-based professional development opportunities from leading experts in the field
- Access to CEC's award-winning journals, TEACHING Exceptional Children and Exceptional Children

Support from connections, peers, and community:

- Access to our exclusive CECommunity All Member Forum
- Complimentary, automatic membership in your local CEC Unit
- Option to join Special Interest Divisions (additional investment required)

Protection for your practice and your profession:

- Discounted premium insurance policies and plans

Regular policy updates and access to advocacy opportunities

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WICEC BOARD MEMBERS

Executive Officers:

President: Becky Zingsheim (becky.zingsheim@mypathschools.com)

President Elect: Rachel Elliott (rachel.elliott@mypathschools.com)

Past President: Gena Santharam (Gena.Santharam@mypathcompanies.com)

Treasurer: Jade Hammel (jade.hammel@mypathschools.com)

Secretary: Brenda Downey (brenda.downey.444@gmail.com)

CAN Coordinator: Wanda Routier (wroutier@gmail.com)

Members at Large:

Membership: Kimberlisa Przychocki (przychockik@iola.k12.wi.us)

Communication: Rachel Elliott (rachel.elliott@mypathschools.com)

Public Policy: Jeremy Ault (jeremy@escuelaverde.org)

Student Affairs/Chapters: Amira Albagshi (amira.albagshi@wsu.edu)

Standing Committee:

Membership Chair: Anna Adl (annamarieadl1980@gmail.com)

Agency Representatives / Volunteers:

WI DPI Rep: Rose Kilmurray

WDEC Rep: Ashley Lindstrom

Volunteer: Jennifer Ours

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS:

- September 2026 (Annual Meeting)
- November 2026
- January 2027
- March 2027
- May 2027



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