

Michigan Teacher Named 2025 National Special Education Teacher of the Year

Arlington, Va., February 27, 2025 – Michael Craig, leader of the Drew Horticulture program in Detroit, Michigan, has been named the 2025 Teacher of the Year by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). The award recognizes excellence among teachers who provide direct services to children and youth with exceptionalities and who exemplify the best in supporting students with disabilities and/or gifts and talents.

Craig teaches at the Drew Transition Center, part of the Detroit Public Schools Community District, a vocational center serving students with moderate to severe disabilities, including those who are visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically impaired, or on the autism spectrum. As the founder of the Drew Horticulture Program, Craig has merged evidence-based educational practices with hands-on, real-world learning experiences that benefit both students and the local community.

Through the program, students cultivate, harvest, and sell fresh produce at local markets—an initiative that has not only led to employment opportunities for students but also provided fresh food to school families, community members, and local food banks. The program empowers students with disabilities by equipping them with valuable skills that foster independence, employment readiness, and healthier lifestyles.

“We are thrilled to honor Michael Craig as CEC’s 2025 Teacher of the Year,” said CEC President Julie Bost. “His dedication, innovation, and unwavering commitment to his students exemplify the very best of the special education profession.”

“Michael Craig is an amazing Special Education Teacher who has the vision to create and manage a program where special needs students are at the front, learning, experiencing, and modeling the very best in measurable skills.” Says Robert Avedisian, the Principal at Drew.

As the 2025 CEC Teacher of the Year, Craig will receive a \$2,000 cash prize, a \$1,000 classroom grant, and travel and accommodations to attend the CEC annual convention in Baltimore, Maryland, where he will be recognized in front of his peers. The CEC Honors Committee selects the CEC Teacher of the Year, and the award is sponsored by Let’s Go Learn, one of CEC’s premier sponsors.

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international professional organization dedicated to high-quality education that is inclusive and equitable for individuals with disabilities. Learn more about CEC at <https://exceptionalchildren.org/>.