



Andrew M. Greeley  
CENTER FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

# Exceptional Learners White Paper

## One Spirit, One Body



# One Spirit, One Body: An Agenda for Serving Students with Disabilities in Catholic Schools

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*As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body,  
though many, are one body, so also Christ.  
For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks,  
slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.*

*Now the body is not a single part, but many.  
If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,"  
it does not for this reason belong any less to the body.  
Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body,"  
it does not for this reason belong any less to the body.*

*If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?  
If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?  
But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended.  
If they were all one part, where would the body be?*

*But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body.  
The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you,"  
nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you."  
Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary,  
and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor,  
and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety,  
whereas our more presentable parts do not need this.*

*But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it,  
so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern  
for one another.*

*If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored,  
all the parts share its joy.*

—I Corinthians, 12:12-26

## The Church's Call for Inclusion and Belonging

The Church reminds us that, by reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity and have the same divine calling (USCCB, 1995). "Catholics with disabilities, like all Catholics, are incorporated in the Body of Christ as integral members. They, like any other member, belong to the faith community" (NCPD, 2015). "Ultimately, what is essential is a commitment to one body, one baptism, one Church, and one God. When persons with disabilities are excluded from catechetical and academic programs, a piece of the Body of Christ is missing (NCPD, 2010)."

Now is an important time in our Church. Pope Francis calls on us to pay attention to people at the margins of society, to meet them, know them, include them, and serve them. In his address *To Participants in the Convention for Persons with Disabilities, promoted by the Italian Episcopal Conference*, Pope Francis stated:

**"...our communities are still struggling to practice a true inclusion, full participation that finally becomes ordinary, normal. And this requires not only technical and specific programs, but first of all recognition and acceptance of faces, tenacious and patient confidence that each person is unique and unrepeatable..." (Pope Francis, June 11, 2016)**

Individuals who have developmental differences, persons with intellectual and physical disabilities, and people who are blind or deaf can be among the most marginalized and vulnerable members of American society. This demands a response from the Church, including Catholic schools.

Through various documents, the Church has called us to consider the needs of those with disabilities. In 1978, the American bishops in their "Pastoral Statement of US Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities" challenged us in this manner:

***Defense of the right to life, then, implies the defense of other rights, which enable the individual with a disability to achieve the fullest measure of personal development of which he or she is capable. These include the right to equal opportunity in education, in employment, in housing, as well as the right to free access to public accommodations, facilities and services. Those who must be institutionalized deserve decent, personalized care and human support as well as the pastoral services of the Christian community. Institutionalization will gradually become less necessary for some as the Christian community increases its awareness of disabled persons and builds a stronger and more integrated support system for them. (10)***

As a ministry of the church, Catholic schools were included in this charge to build "a stronger and more integrated system of support" for people with disabilities. Today, some may view discussions like this as laudable, but maybe we are only trying to catch up to what the Church called us to do nearly 40 years ago.

Further, the bishops specifically challenged Catholic schools to consider how to develop an integrated approach in order to best meet the needs of those with disabilities (NCCB, 1978).

***"...Catholic elementary and secondary school teachers could be provided in-service training in how best to integrate students with disabilities into programs of regular education. (30)"***

**Remember, this document was written in 1978.** The bishops continue:

***"Moreover, in order to ensure the widest possible range of educational opportunities, Catholic facilities should be encouraged to develop working relationships both among themselves and with private and public agencies serving the same population (32)."***

Additionally, the Document of the Holy See for the International Year of the Disabled Persons (1981) sets several principles for working with individuals with disabilities that have potential implications for Catholic schools.

1. The disabled person is a fully human subject, with the corresponding innate, sacred, and inviolable rights.
2. Since the person suffering from handicaps is a subject with full rights, he or she must be helped to take his or her place in society in all aspects and at all levels, as far as is compatible with his or her capabilities.
3. By recognizing and promoting that person's (with a disability) dignity and rights, we are recognizing and promoting our own dignity and our own rights.
4. The fundamental approach to the problems connected with the sharing by the disabled in the life of society must be inspired by the principles of integration, normalization and personalization.

Clearly, the Church has challenged us to meet the needs of those with disabilities. This act of meeting the needs of those with disabilities is not something that is “*nice to do*”- it is something that we are “*called to do.*”

**“All persons with disabilities have the capacity to proclaim the Gospel and to be living witnesses to its truth within the community of faith and offer valuable gifts. Their involvement enriches every aspect of Church life...They (persons with disabilities) are not just recipients of catechesis-they are also its agents”(USCCB, 2005).**

**“They are also its agents.”** This is a powerful phrase. This challenges us to recognize that no one of us is greater than the other and that Christ is alive in each one of us. Truly, we are all part of the body of Christ. We must be Christ to each other, delivering His Gospel message of compassion and truth. We are also challenged to not just create systems where students are granted access to programs but to create cultures where all students *belong* in the faith community. In true cultures of belonging, there is a genuine recognition that each of us is a member of the body of Christ, no one is greater and no one is the least.

So the charge and the challenge...Given the limited resources that Catholic Schools face on a regular basis, we must ask ourselves how we live this call for justice and create cultures of belonging, as the Church urges us to do? As Pope Francis recently reiterated in his address *To Participants in the Convention for Persons with Disabilities, promoted by the Italian Episcopal Conference (June 11,2016)*, each of us has a different way of understanding things, but we can all know God.

**“Here I would stress that dedication and concern shown to the migrants and to persons with special needs alike is a sign of the Spirit. Both situations are paradigmatic: they serve as a test of our commitment to show mercy in welcoming others and to help the vulnerable to be fully a part of our communities” (Pope Francis, 2016, no.47).**

The Church documents not only focus our efforts on granting access to *spaces and programs* but also to magnify our efforts for *inclusion and belonging*. Through these documents, we are urged to ensure that people with disabilities have a sense of full community in the Church. It is important that we eschew feelings of sympathy for those with disabilities, as this only fuels barriers to belonging. Rather, we should enter each encounter with those individuals with a sense of empathy, recognizing that Christ is present in each of us. We must acknowledge that each of us, disabled or not, are both agent and recipient of catechesis, secure in knowing that we are enriched by each other’s presence.

## The Challenges for Catholic Schools

Despite the fact that private schools are not required to legally comply with the least restrictive environment mandates of the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), there is evidence to show that Catholic schools are responding to the Church’s challenge to serve students with disabilities. The principle findings of the USCCB (2002) study, *Catholic School Children with Disabilities*, found that nationally, 7 percent of children enrolled in Catholic schools are children with disabilities, compared to 11.4 percent enrolled in public schools. When comparing disability types, Catholic schools enroll a greater percentage of children diagnosed with hearing impairment or deafness, developmental delay, speech/language, uncorrected vision impairment or blindness, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairments than public schools (USCCB, 2002: p. 11). Huppe (2010) notes that other disability categories such as mental retardation, autism, and emotional disorders have a “significantly lower representation in Catholic schools than in public schools.”

Statutory and regulatory changes in the laws that govern the administration of the delivery of special education in non-public schools have proven to be challenging obstacles for Catholic schools. Students with disabilities enrolled in private schools by their parents are not entitled to a free and appropriate public education under IDEIA. The IDEIA does not require school districts to serve all children with disabilities enrolled in private schools. Instead, school districts are required to spend a proportionate share of their federal funds on students who are enrolled in private schools by their parents. If school districts provide this proportionate share, they meet their obligations under the IDEIA, even if all eligible children are not served. (Russo, Massucci, & Osborne, 2000). This has pressed Catholic Schools who feel the tension between wanting to serve students with disabilities and feeling the financial press on how to do this. However, the United States Catholic Bishops have stated:

**Costs must never be the controlling consideration limiting the welcome offered to those among us with disabilities, since provision of access to religious functions is a pastoral duty (USCCB, 1998, p.2).**

"The focus on the inequities in funding between public and private schools often provides an opportunity to justify the inability to provide services for children with special needs" (Moreau, Weaver, R. Davis, S. Landers M. 2006). However, the failure to serve students with disabilities in Catholic schools may actually be "due to an underlying belief on the part of many Catholic educators that children with special needs would be better served elsewhere" (Moreau et al., 2006). In many instances, it has been an assumption that the responsibility for the education of students with disabilities lies in the public school domain, whereas Catholic education encompasses so much more than just academic preparation. Catholic education offers spiritual formation, a faith community and a sense of belonging to the larger church which cannot be replicated within the public school setting. Certainly, the Bishops have noted the value in the interaction between those individuals with disabilities and those without. In such an interchange, "it is often the person with a disability who gives the gift of most value" (USCCB, 1998). Educating individuals with disabilities within the Catholic school setting helps those without disabilities to see the real world reflected in their school, creates a sense of normalization that disability is a part of life and helps to minimize the stigma of disability.

Whereas there are several other sources of information around sustainable approaches to inclusionary approaches, there are none dedicated to the unique context of Catholic schools. By the nature of federal legislation and state mandates, public schools are required by statute to implement special education programming. Therefore, all of the resources that are available are related to inclusionary practices within the public school sector (and the governmental resources that accompany this approach). Catholic school educators are often left to have to translate these programs into the Catholic school context with little to no technical assistance. This has often left the Catholic school isolated and without support. As a result, Catholic schools are reluctant to include students with disabilities because they do not have the technical skills or the capacity/support to implement these approaches.

## A Framework for an Integrated System of Support

**It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action...(Octogesima Adveniens, 48,1971).**

These words from Pope Paul IV serve as a call to Catholic schools to adapt and innovate to meet the needs of the students that are entering the schoolhouse doors. As Catholic educators, we cannot only talk about delivering a *just* education, we must create and refine the systems to deliver an education that can assist all students to grow in their faith through the experience of Catholic education. Across the country, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is growth in programming for students with disabilities in Catholic schools (Burke and Griffin, 2016; Durow, 2007; Powell, 2004). However, Moreau et. al. (2006) suggest "The pockets of excellent practice that are evident in many Catholic schools demonstrate that Catholic school teachers and administrators can develop an attitude of inclusiveness as well as problem-solving models that allow excellent programming and accommodations to develop in settings that are not funded adequately." In order to expand services for students with disabilities within Catholic schools, there is a need for a systematic approach to developing comprehensive systems for inclusionary practices in Catholic schools. A coordinated effort to connect these isolated pockets of innovation would help to give voice to exemplary programs and offer support to a variety of faith based schools.

The comprehensive system to support students with disabilities (Boyle, 2016) includes articulated professional development needs and supports from the classroom level to the national organizational level (Figure A). By adopting a common model of integration, new collaboration among Catholic schools can be fostered. A unified approach opens the doors for the creation of shared service delivery systems that can maximize limited resources in the service of students with disabilities. A common framework provides a shared vocabulary about serving students with disabilities and a unified voice that will help clearly articulate this mission to potential funders and policy writers.

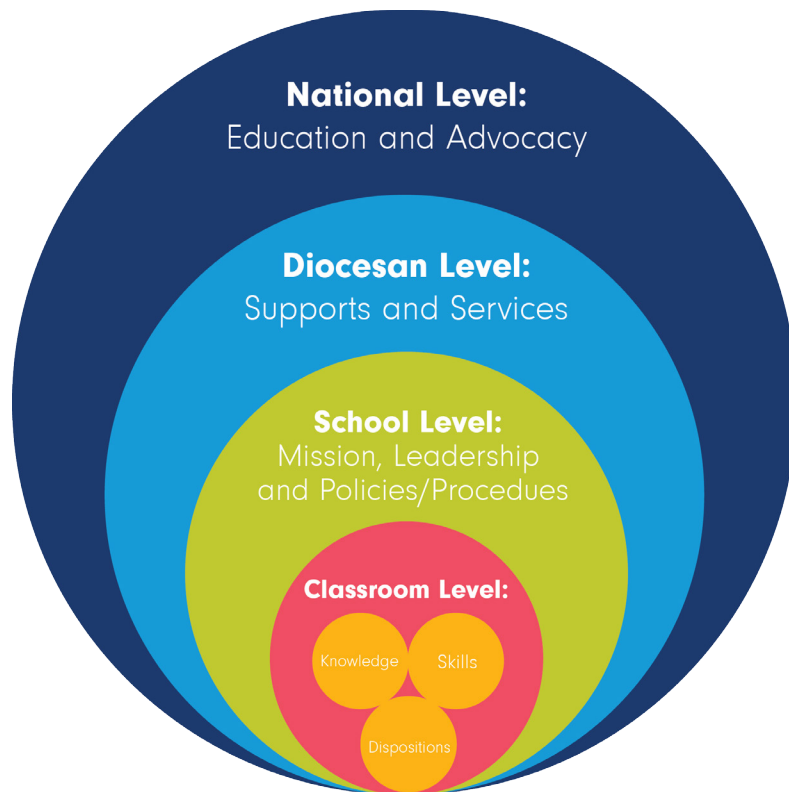


Figure A: Integrated Support System for Student with Disabilities in Catholic Schools (Boyle, 2016)

### Classroom Level: Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions

At the core of this systematic model is the classroom teacher. If approaches to delivering a Catholic education to those with disabilities are to be successful, we must think how we support all teachers in this endeavor. Professional development should be provided for school staff to enhance the following areas:

- **Knowledge:** Directed development in understanding various disabilities and the interference with learning. We cannot make instructional decisions based on faulty conceptions about disability. Understanding that disabilities impact learning in a variety of manners will help to direct the kind of instructional approaches that may be required.
- **Skills:** It is essential to assist teachers in developing evidenced-based instructional strategies, differentiation of instruction, curriculum design to identify essential learning targets, accommodations/modifications, and assessment practices. These approaches, like Universal Design for Learning (UDL), not only support those with disabilities but also benefit the other students in the class.
- **Dispositions:** A critical area of development is the fostering of dispositions in serving people with disabilities. It is vital for staff to understand the connection between Catholic Social Teaching and the provision of services to students with disabilities. This work only advances our Catholic Identity by allowing us live daily the Corporal Works of Mercy. Understanding the catechetical basis of serving students with disabilities assists us in living the mission of Catholic education, to ensure that we are helping all prepare for heaven. Ultimately, this helps to concentrate the focus on teaching in a Catholic school as ministry. As Pope Francis reminds us, serving those with disabilities helps us to truly develop the “confidence that each person is unique and unrepeatable.”

### School Level: Mission, Leadership, and Policies/Procedures

The support of students with disabilities cannot be the responsibility of the classroom teacher alone. The school must approach the delivery of this kind of support from a community perspective. Viewing this kind of support from a organizational level approach rather than an Ad Hoc approach helps to systematize the response, increasing the effective use of limited resources. Three critical factors to be included are mission, leadership and policies/procedures.



## Mission

Canon 794 §1 states that “The duty and right of educating belongs in a special way to the Church, to which has been divinely entrusted the mission of assisting persons so that they are able to reach the fullness of the Christian life.” Further, pastors are charged with the duty of arranging everything so that all the faithful have a Catholic education (Canon 794 §2.) Embracing the needs of students with disabilities in schools can be viewed as a way to concretely demonstrate the mission of Catholic education in the formation of the whole person. “When persons with disabilities are excluded from catechetical and academic programs, a piece of the Body of Christ is missing (NCPD, 2010). The Church documents reviewed earlier highlight the moral imperative to create and sustain programming for students with disabilities in Catholic schools. Scanlon (2009) ties Catholic school programming for students with disabilities with the obligations of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). In fact, Carlson (2014) argues that, based upon the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas and CST, Catholic Schools must offer special educational services to remain true to Church teachings.

## Leadership

To that end, how do we equip school leaders with the necessary tools to lead and support these efforts? Directed professional development specific to knowledge, skills and dispositions in meeting the needs of students with disabilities will help to fill this gap.

- **Knowledge:** School leaders must be equipped with the specific knowledge about special education policies and procedures. This knowledge is vital in assisting the Catholic school principal in advocating for students with disabilities in their schools. The knowledge of disability is also critical for school staff to possess in order to effectively minister to the families of students with disabilities. As a support to their teachers, schools leaders must also have an understanding of the impact of disability on learning. Additionally, Catholic school leaders must be current on the innovations that are occurring in their public school counterparts. With recent advances in Response to Intervention/Multi-tiered Systems of Support (RtI/MTSS), application of these approaches can positively impact programming for students with disabilities within the Catholic school setting (Boyle, 2010).
- **Skills:** A critical skill for Catholic school leaders is the ability to lead change. Creating systems to serve students with disabilities in Catholic schools comes with a great deal of challenge. The ability to navigate new courses with faculty, parents, and the school community is essential in creating systems of supports for students with disabilities. Administrators must be equipped to provide training, support and supervision to continually develop elements of the RtI/MTSS framework in their buildings. This may include providing effective professional development in the RtI/MTSS Tier 1 programming (curriculum development, supporting differentiated and research-based instruction, developing comprehensive assessment systems, and a school-wide behavior system) in order to build the capacity of staff in meeting the needs of all students (Boyle, 2010). Administrators must also have the skills to support alternate models of services delivery, including co-teaching approaches, as necessary. Additionally, administrators must understand root cause analysis to ensure that there is a systematic approach to understanding when a student isn't progressing in the manner that is expected. Root cause for the lack of progression can be hypothesized and potential strategies can be identified. This kind of thinking can help to free the organization to explore all of the strategies within their control.

Additional skills include the ability to seek funding through various agencies and grant making organizations. The ability to partner with outside agencies can help to provide channels to secure potential funds to support efforts to address the needs of students with disabilities. It is important to be able to network and develop strong relationships with the local public school entity, in order to find creative ways to access special education funding/proportionate share funds to support local school efforts.

- **Dispositions:** Dispositions are also critical for the school leader. School leaders need development and support in using a ministerial approach to serving students with disabilities and their families. Certainly, creativity, flexibility and the inclination to collaborate are critical dispositions. Additionally, a justice orientation is critical and seeing that serving those with disabilities brings to life our obligations under Catholic Social Teaching. The ability to engage in reflection assists in the decision making process on how to meet the needs of students with disabilities in Catholic Schools. Utilizing a contemplative model for problem solving, Long and Schuttoffel (2013) offer a process to consider the various needs of the student, school and community in creating approaches to serving students with disabilities in Catholic schools (Figure B).

The development of dispositions toward serving students comes from direct experience with persons with disabilities. Boyle and Hernandez (2016) found that Catholic school principals are less likely to include those individuals with disabilities when the principals have less interaction and experience with those types of disabilities. This would suggest that Catholic schools principals may need directed supports with various disability classes to increase their understanding of educational needs and how this may translate to the Catholic school setting.

Inherent in this approach, Catholic school leaders must develop an infrastructure that supports collegiality and problem solving. Are there team-based structures that focus on using data and root cause analysis to “problem solve” through issues? Is there an action research orientation that will assist schools with the ability to develop and track the effectiveness of interventions?

The school leaders embodiment of these dispositions are the starting point for cultivating a school culture which ensures that we value the gifts of everyone. The essential question is, “How can we challenge students and staff to see the face of Jesus in everyone that we meet?” How do school communities develop, as Pope Francis asked, “...a tenacious and patient confidence that each person is unique and unrepeatable?”

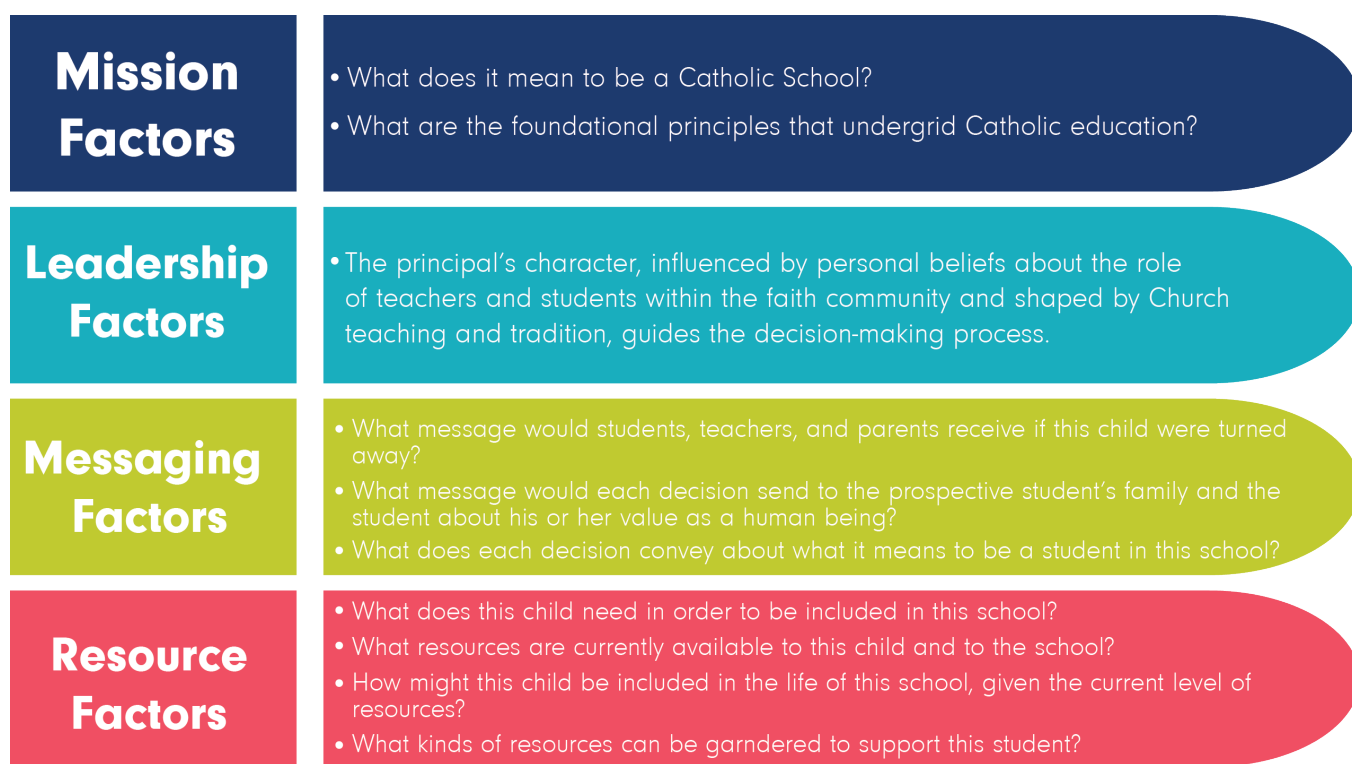


Figure B: Contemplative Model for Decision-Making for Catholic School Leaders based on Long and Schuttloffel (2013)

### ***Policies/Procedures***

In addition to the mission and leadership mindsets required to design approaches to serving students with disabilities, there are policy and procedural requisites. Policy and procedure helps to move the school from making *ad hoc* responses to each request for special service and assists the schools to standardize the response to such requests and focuses the school’s energy related to these areas. Additionally, policies and procedures ensure that schools have the capacity and the resources to adequately respond to students with disabilities.

What, on the surface, are basic questions are really critical starting points to handling requests for educational programming for students with disabilities. Starting with the protocol of initial parent inquiries, has the office staff been adequately trained on how to respond to an inquiry on how the school handles a disability. It is advisable to identify a point person who can help to respond to such requests. This is the start of the ministerial approach. Is there a developed response to reaching out to welcome parish families with students with disabilities? It is important for schools to let families know that Catholic schools can be a possibility. Without a welcoming response to families, Catholic schools run the risk of “closing the doors”- not just of the schools but the Church, as well.



There are several other key questions that can help to guide the creation of policies and procedures to effectively respond to requests for services. A few key considerations include:

- Has the school developed an intake process to identify the specific learning needs and instructional responses for a student?
- What are the forms used to develop intervention plans for students?
- Is there a process to incorporate parents into the plan development and monitoring process?

## **Protocols**

The development of protocols creates channels to concretize policies and procedures. Protocols ensure ways for schools to work smarter and not have to “re-invent the wheel” for every new student. For teachers and staff, this also systematizes the responses and lessens the ambiguity of working with disability. Ultimately, it ensures that students are treated in a fair and equitable manner.

To approach serving those students with disabilities in just and merciful ways, there should be school-based procedures to provide the necessary technical knowledge and support to the classroom teacher. It cannot be expected for classroom teachers to implement these kinds of strategies and interventions on their own. To this end, it is important for the Catholic school to identify the kinds of consultants and/or practitioners that can be provided to collaborate and support classroom teachers. The ultimate question is “Given the constraints of budgets, how can schools find ways to creatively develop these kinds of supports?.” A very real factor is that there is a current scarcity of certified special education teachers. One strategy to address this need is “to grow our own.” Taking teachers that are committed to the mission of Catholic education and providing additional graduate work in the area of special education will assist in developing a corps of staff that can bring the expertise needed to develop the requisite policies, procedures and protocols to effectively deliver of services to students with disabilities.

## **Diocesan Level: Supports and Services**

Without a sense of explicit organization, there is a risk of creating a series of school-based programs that are operating in silos. In order to avoid creating “pockets of innovations” where some schools are developing programs and others are struggling to create programs, there needs to be a way to identify and share approaches to instructional supports for students with disabilities (i.e. resources, special education consultants, network types of systems to work among the Catholic schools in a diocese). Diocesan offices of Catholic education can be in an important position of facilitating new kinds of collaboration among schools. Diocesan offices of Catholic education can help to facilitate the sharing of resources among schools within the diocese. By using systematic approaches to addressing the needs of students with disabilities, there might be greater opportunities for support from various foundations. Diocesan offices of Catholic education can help to set priorities and help to locate the necessary funds to provide ongoing professional development for Catholic schools. Diocesan offices can also leverage economies of scale to services. To this end, Diocesan offices can create partnerships with colleges and universities to provide graduate studies to support this approach.

## **National Level: Education and Advocacy**

Moving forward, a unified system of providing students with disabilities in Catholic Schools provides a rich opportunity for new alliances and collaborative structures among various stakeholders.

## **Education**

**Catholic institutions of higher education should also increase their knowledge about human disability through research, not only in the secular fields of inquiry, but also as theological inquiry. (Long and Schuttloffel, 2013)**

As previously presented, many of the disability resources that are available are related to inclusionary practices and contextualized for the public school. The result of this is that Catholic school educators are often left to have to translate these programs into the Catholic school context with little to no technical assistance. This gap provides a rich opportunity for collaboration among the Catholic schools, National Catholic Educational Association and Catholic Institutions of Higher Education.

Potential Activities could include:

- Building leadership capacity through specialized national Leadership Institutes focused on enhancing the knowledge, skills and dispositions to effectively lead for the inclusion of people with disabilities within Catholic school settings
- Developing practitioner showcases to highlight the kinds of inclusive practices that are currently being undertaken
- Producing resource manuals, program guides, and other publications about best practices in inclusionary practices for Catholic schools
- Creating and delivering professional development processes for schools and dioceses on comprehensive approaches to inclusion within Catholic school settings

### **Social Service Agency Consultation**

- Develop protocols and templates to build the capacity of social service agencies across the country to partner with Catholic and other faith based schools to implement inclusive practices
- Provide technical assistance to agencies to promote collaborative relationships with Catholic and other faith based schools around the inclusionary approaches

### **Technical Support**

- Developing platforms for Catholic schools from around the country to connect and network about inclusive practices in Catholic schools
- Creating a web-based repository to house and share school created products (procedures, flow charts, and other documents) around the implementation of inclusionary practices
- Increasing access to expert information to support Catholic schools in their inclusionary efforts
- Establishing a forum of “success” stories about inclusion initiatives

### **Program Reviews**

- Developing a methodology to review inclusive programs to establish a standard of care
- Establishing “best practice” designation for current Catholic school inclusion programs to concretize exemplars of aspirational approaches to inclusion
- Formulating implementation rubrics and planning guides based on the best practices designation to assist Catholic schools in the various stages of developing approaches for inclusion

## **Advocacy**

With a common framework for addressing the needs of students with disabilities in Catholic schools, the process of advocacy becomes more manageable. It is critical to create a voice for advocacy on policy issues related to disability and its impact on access to services in Catholic schools. To this end, Catholic Institutions of Higher Education can provide the research support to help track and support progress in this area. With the Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act requiring reauthorization, it will be important for Catholic schools to speak in a unified manner to ensure that Catholic schools (and other faith based schools) are represented fairly in any new legislation. It also serves as a way to ensure that Catholic schools can be protected from burdensome legislation and work towards true equitable participation.

## **Synthesis and Call to Action**

We are many parts, but one body -- the body of Christ. Without explicitly finding ways to welcome students with disabilities in Catholic schools, a piece of that body is missing. “We are a single flock under the care of a single shepherd. There can be no separate Church for persons with disabilities (USCCB, 1998).” We know that many challenges that Catholic schools face in developing responses to serving students with disabilities. Yet, as Pope Paul IV reminds us,

**“The Church invites all Christians to take up a double task of inspiring and innovating in order to make structures evolve so as to adapt them to the real needs of today.” (Octogesima Adveniens, 48, 1971).**

It cannot be enough to just recognize that Catholic schools should address the needs of students with disabilities and complain that we don’t have enough resources. Without action, faith is like a sounding gong. As we are reminded:

***What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (James, 2:14-17)***

We must be moved to action. Given the constraints that we face, Catholic schools need to find viable ways to address the needs of those with disabilities. This will call for unprecedented levels of cooperation among Catholic schools and various other stakeholders. By developing a unified vernacular and shared framework, Catholic schools and other stakeholders can develop a common ground for collaboration in the development of effective avenues to provide services to those with disabilities. We must ensure that those with disabilities are full participants and experience belonging in Catholic schools.

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