

Welcoming and Serving ALL in our Care
Presented by the Diversified Learners Executive Committee
March 12, 2015 Principals' Meeting
Palisades Retreat Center

The 2014 OCS Strategic Plan intentionally named the importance and purpose of welcoming and serving a broader spectrum of students for all 74 Catholic schools.

READINESS STEPS: What can we do now?

School Leadership Team: Vision, Ideas and proactive strategies, and Energy (V+ I + E = SUCCESS!)

- Hire for mission
- Hire for the spirit and confidence of inclusion
- Design your Leadership Team = who will carry the call initially? School leader, lead teachers, parent advocate, others. There is no one formula.
- Review teachers' educational background to determine if you already have personnel who might have specific training/background that could bless (be an impact player) for the leadership team.
- Restructure your leadership team to highlight a teacher leader who might move into a new role: Inclusion Coordinator – see sample job description.
- Review your school's **climate data** on:
 - Student Tardiness - to school, to class
 - Absenteeism – Who? Why? What are your expectations?
 - Student Behaviors and Disciplinary actions – What's happening inside and outside of the classrooms? Unstructured times? What needs to be managed? Changed? Enhanced?

Are there areas of school climate data that need attention to strengthen your community? Are emotional, social, and behavioral expectations conveyed to the community? Every time you intervene (retool), it shows you care and points the community to what you want the community to become. Begin to assess the mental health/wellness needs of your community? Is your school community a **SAFE** environment for all learners?

- Review your **current student population** – research suggests you already have students with special needs. Have they been identified? Who are your mysteries? Do you have local student support plans in place? Are Title I services activated? Other?
- Review your **achievement data** through the lens of your most vulnerable students. There could be a different priorities for specific students with special needs....may not necessarily be the road of academic excellence, may be the road for social, emotional and/or inclusive community experience. Can your community be flexible with a differentiated roadmap for learning? What is the growth vision for your most vulnerable students?
- Implement the **PLC cycle** that intentionally embeds serving students with special needs as a priority into the cycle. Foster an on-going, sustainable, growth model with a 3-5 year plan.

Your Team - Teachers and Support Staff

- Transforming a culture through caring and empathy. How? How the community sees the school leaders responding with care **does** begin to shift the community. Others will begin to invest in your vision. Ownership of the collective vision is the goal. Your attitude and approach matters!
- Professional Development, On-going Training, Professional Support: Differentiated Instruction and Assessment, be aware of the PD offerings from the Archdiocese, the regions, network of Universities, and local offerings. www.ocswv.org - Teacher Mailings – Weekly Mailings, other.
- Visit other Catholic schools to **build confidence** and vision - Teachers want to SEE how inclusion looks like, sounds like, feels like. Identify schools to go visit. Encourage teachers to shadow, ask questions, begin building a network of support. Network with your DL Regional team.
- **DEDICATED TIME:** Design a structure of instructional support that fosters on-going dialogue, troubleshooting, action steps, mentoring and listening time.

- **Get Into It - Special Olympics Education Program.** Free PreK -12 curriculum consisting of online resources that include lessons, activities, videos, athlete stories and supplemental materials. At the core of Get Into It are age-appropriate lessons designed to be taught in the context of class periods.
<http://resources.specialolympics.org/get-into-it-resources.aspx>

Parent Community

- Each day, **positive first impressions** are critical to build and nurture a caring community. Who is the first contact (ambassador) for your school for special needs? Identify and train key personnel in customer service and hospitality skills as part of building a welcoming community. Expand this capacity and expectation for all staff and faculty as you are building a culture of positive relationships.
- Identify your **advocates** in this arena. Recognize the initial fear and build in educational and resource support to assist parents in responding to the call to build an inclusive faith community. Welcoming hospitality – foster connections – respect - safety - empathy – trust.
- Invite a parent advocate to serve on School Commission, develop parent partners to support families walking the journey with special needs, consider a needs assessment survey in the area of inclusion. Data helps focus and drive the call.

Students

- Building a student culture of empathy. Consider exploring Project Unify through Special Olympics – located online at <http://www.specialolympicswashington.org/>
- Promote Inter-grade connections through “Families” to create and foster natural connections between different student age groups.
- Service learning and mentoring opportunities abound naturally in Catholic schools. Keep intentionally expanding opportunities for students to grow in their social and service skills.

Pastoral Team and Parishioners

- **Network** with parish leadership to better understand your school – parish populations. Invite families to school – church functions that build relationships, activities and programs. Remember the gift of the sacraments for our students with special needs. Adaptive sacramental preparation curriculum models now available – ie: Loyola Press Publishing <http://loyolapress.com/special-needs.htm>
- Archdiocesan Special Needs Ministry – Erica Cohen Moore, Director
<http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Ethnic/PC/SN.aspx>
Open Doors Resources at <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Ethnic/PC/snresources.aspx>
Accessibility search for Parishes
<http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Ethnic/PC/snaccessibility.aspx>

Resources are coming!!

- Visit our OCS online **Diversified Learners Forum** at <http://www.ocsw.org/site/forumdisplay.php?f=73>
- Diversified Learners Resources to share: <http://www.ocsw.org/site/showthread.php?t=2174>
- ACE Consulting, University of Notre Dame "Toolkit for Inclusion" 180 pages
<http://ace.nd.edu/resources/ace-toolkit-for-inclusion>
University of Notre Dame: Teaching Exceptional Learners <http://ace.nd.edu/tec>
- Develop book read opportunities for students and adults! Consider Archdiocesan Library Media Center
http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Assets/Library/4693_CheckItOut-2014-04.pdf
- Catechetical Resources for Families of Children with Disability
[http://www.ocsw.org/files/uploads/18/Bibliography on Disabilities and Resources REV1.pdf](http://www.ocsw.org/files/uploads/18/Bibliography%20on%20Disabilities%20and%20Resources%20REV1.pdf)
- Families with Special Needs Mass with Archbishop Sartain – August 29, 2015 10:00 a.m. St. James Cathedral. Come pray and celebrate!

Diversified Learners = Unified Learners