

DIVERSIFIED LEARNERS GUIDEBOOK

Archdiocese of Seattle

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PREFACE

This Guidebook is designed to serve as a resource for Catholic educators within the Archdiocese of Seattle for support in the development of diversified educational programs for *all* students. It is intended to provide the foundation for discussions across regions and also between elementary and secondary programs in an attempt to not only arrive at common understandings, terminology and practice to aid in the transition of students throughout the system, but also to encourage broader accessibility to our schools for all families, especially those that include academically exceptional children.

Our Guidebook is a dynamic document – to be added to as strategies develop, policies are enacted, and additional resources become available. Realizing that each school is uniquely reflective of its circumstances and leadership, the processes and forms contained herein may be adapted to meet individual site needs while maintaining the integrity of the diocesan philosophy in this area.

Because the material in the Handbook integrates well with our WCEA/WASC Accreditation Process, it should serve as an integral resource in developing the Self-Study, as well as then implementing local Schoolwide Learning Expectations and future goal setting.

When questions arise regarding the ability of an individual school to accept and serve any student, the information within this handbook should support, and yet challenge, a school. However, the final decision rests with the individual school in the knowledge of itself and the student needs presented. This Guidebook, along with the Catholic Schools Policy Handbook, should aid in the continual definition and implementation of school policies in this area.

The Diversified Learner Committee appreciatively recognizes the Diocese of Orange (CA) for permission to use their Learning Support Handbook as the genesis of this localized scaffold for our Archdiocesan schools.

Policy for Students with Special Needs

A Catholic school will accept any child for whom an appropriate program can be designed and implemented following its prescribed enrollment procedures. Each child is to be considered for admission based upon his/her emotional, academic and physical needs and the resources available to the school in meeting those needs. The local school site determines continued enrollment based on these factors.

Policies Manual, Archdiocese of Seattle Catholic Schools, 4.1(G)

Mission, Philosophy and Goals

In seeking to support schools striving to create a welcoming environment for the broadest range of students, the Diversified Learner Committee of the Seattle Archdiocese evaluates their work using the lens of the collective wisdom that continues to define our schools in mission and program.

“Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the good news. First and foremost, every Catholic institution is a place to encounter the Living God, who in Jesus Christ reveals His transforming love and truth.”

Pope Benedict XVI, April 17, 2008.

Rooted in that conviction, our schools have long sought the most effective and efficient ways to deliver upon that promise.

*“Catholic schools exist to form young people in the faith and to provide a faith-based environment for their education. In cooperation and partnership with parents – the first educators of their children – our schools seek to educate the whole child by providing an excellent education and the formation of character. Catholic schools cultivate the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity; the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance; and the intellectual virtues of critical thinking and wisdom. Informed by these three sets of virtues, a comprehensive curriculum has as its goal the spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual and physical development **appropriate to the needs of each child.**”* (Emphasis added)

Section 1 - Organization, Archdiocesan School Policy Manual 2014

The Committee fully understands that finding the ways to “include” those exceptional students whose needs may present different kinds of challenges can, at times, appear overwhelming. Yet, we also acknowledge that at the very heart of our evangelizing mission, Catholic schools should “be available to all people who desire a Catholic school education for their children.” (*Gravissimim Educationis*, 6).

Or, perhaps in more familiar words:

“Every time you did this to the least of my brothers you did it to me”

Mt 25,40

In promulgating the new strategic plan for Archdiocesan schools, Archbishop Sartain calls each of us to continue our work as wise stewards of the blessings God has given us to provide “the best that Catholic education can offer.” Specifically, the plan calls for the continued creation of accessible and welcoming communities, especially naming diverse learners. Thus, one identified action specifically charges:

“The OCS (Office for Catholic Schools) in consultation with the ASB (Archdiocesan School Board), the Executive Principals, and the Diversified Learners Committee and in accordance with the mission of Catholic Education, will develop and promote the implementation of policies and procedures to maximize student admissions, classroom placement and instruction, and educational resources for diversified learners at the local school level.”

Strength To Strength, Goal 3, Action 5 Diversified Learners

We go about this work in concert with Archdiocesan efforts across ministry levels – including those of the Office of Pastoral Care’s Special Needs Ministry – recognizing that:

“We are a single flock under the care of a single shepherd. There can be no separate Church for persons with disabilities.”

Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities, USCCB, 1998

It is the intent, then, of this Guidebook to assist the communities in our schools to expand upon their already notable successes in creating the best possible learning choices for families that are welcoming, inclusive and diverse; as in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians – Many parts, one body.

Just as we believe that each of us has been made in the image and likeness of God, it holds then that human dignity finds its origin in that design (Genesis 1:27). This dignity is not based on one’s accomplishments, contributions, ethnicity, or ability. It is God-given, and in God’s eyes all are equally blessed, worthy and equal.

Para - Beyond Academics, James M. Frabutt, University of Notre Dame, 2013

Who is the Diversified Learner Committee

The Diversified Learners committee (DLC) is a dynamic group of principals, teachers, and parents whose work is intended to support students of varying ability and diverse learning needs as inclusive members in Catholic school classrooms.

Belief Statements

- The DLC commits to educating the whole child: spiritually, academically and socially.
- The DLC is rooted in the belief that inclusion is a cornerstone of our mission.
- The DLC is dedicated to including exceptional learners in Catholic schools.

Actions

- The DLC continually seeks to provide opportunities for parent education and professional development to all faculty, staff, pastors and pastoral staff.
- The DLC guides regional support between our Catholic schools in the teaching and learning of diverse learners.
- The DLC promotes inclusion of students through the sharing of common resources.

- The DLC combines efforts with the Office for Pastoral Care to broaden the scope of archdiocesan services to families in our care.

Diversified Education Model for Catholic Schools

Being an inclusive school does not equate with being an interventionist school. Giving life to the ideal means that we strive to provide general education settings of highest quality, while at the same time always remaining open to welcoming and understanding the exceptionalities of a highly diverse range of students. The purpose of the DLC is not to create scores of destination schools with dedicated special education resources intended to attract a niche population. It is not an expectation, nor would it be in our best interest, to prescribe or implement therapy. Our programs should, however, coordinate with a wealth of outside resources to provide good first teaching. Through implementation of a differentiated curriculum design, coupled with educated and supported staff, we can offer families a first-rate, faith-based PK-8 learning choice for any and all of their children.

Following the best practices that serve children of *all* gifts and abilities, Seattle Archdiocesan Catholic schools seek to create a welcoming and inclusive community where each child can:

- Develop holistically to the best of his/her ability,
- Develop personal intelligences,
- Learn to capitalize on strengths,
- Develop strategies to manage obstacles to learning,
- Become an independent learner who assumes responsibility for learning and behavior,
- Become intrinsically motivated, and believe he or she can succeed with effort and persistence.
- Develops a social and emotional independence
- Learn to advocate for oneself

To accomplish the above, an inclusive school strives to:

- Develop a climate where each child is seen as having gifts,
- Acknowledge each student for whom he/she is as a gift from God,
- Identify, develop and utilize individual student strengths,
- Identify challenges and keep them from becoming obstacles to achievement/success,
- Create a climate that fosters self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and personal intelligence,
- Create a climate that celebrates diversity,
- Adapt curriculum to students; (*Curriculum is the “what” of learning; instruction provides the “how” of learning*),
- Encourage students to utilize strategies that work for them,
- See learning as a match between learner and environment,
- View intelligence as dynamic, multifaceted, distributed, and contextually determined,
- View aptitude differences as benefiting all within a classroom,
- Emphasize the “process” in learning,
- Set individual versus competitive goals; by defining success as learning growth,
- Make academic success possible by expecting all to succeed and showing them how,
- Encourage intrinsic motivation by focusing on curiosity, optimal challenge, and control,
- Teach for understanding and transfer/application; focus on learning to learn,
- Include a program to work collaboratively with parents.

And in support, ALL staff in the inclusive program:

- Communicate a strong faith and belief system that all children are a gift from God and can be raised to maximum potential through guidance and teaching,
- **ALWAYS** model “person-first” language when describing another individual.
- Accommodate for student needs in achieving prescribed curriculum and when possible, modify the existing curriculum to meet exceptional needs on either end of the learning spectrum,
- Are able to informally assess the skills a student needs,
- Utilize each child’s individual interests and internal motivation for developing needed skills,
- Set high but possibly alternative expectations that are suitable for an individual student,
- Make appropriate expectations for **EACH** student, regardless of the student’s capabilities,
- Determine how to modify assignments for students and how to differentiate classroom instruction so that all students have a part in the learning process,
- Value all kinds of skills that students bring to a class, not just the academic skills,
- Provide daily successful experiences for all students,
- Know a variety of instructional strategies and how to use them effectively,
- Adapt materials and rewrite objectives for students to meet the Schoolwide Learning Expectations of the school,
- Work as a team with parents, other school personnel and outside professionals (as needed) to determine and provide the best instruction for individual students,
- View working with each child as an opportunity to develop better teaching skills, and
- Demonstrate flexibility and tolerate ambiguity while maintaining vision and expectations for each student.

Determining the Ability to Meet a Student’s Needs Within a Catholic School.

It is the desire of our Catholic schools to provide the best possible education for each child. The school should always consider a perspective student in light of available resources in order to determine:

1. What are the strengths and needs of the prospective student?

Review:

- Previous report cards
- Entrance assessments
- Previous psycho-educational assessments and IEPs or 504 Plans if applicable

2. Why do the parents wish the child to attend this school?

Determine:

- What expectations do the parents have?
- Are the parents’ expectations realistic?
- Does the school have the resources to meet the parents’ expectations?

3. Can the student him/herself commit to the school?

4. What support does the school have in place to accommodate the student?

5. *Are the parents able to provide additional support deemed necessary for the student's success?*
6. *Can the classroom teacher provide necessary adaptations for the student as well as accommodations or modifications?*
7. *How will the student be assessed to measure academic growth and achievement?*
8. *How will this assessment of student progress be accurately articulated with the child's NEXT step in schooling?*

Once a student is accepted into a school, ongoing evaluation and dialogue with the parents is imperative to monitor the student's progress and the ability of the school to meet the student's needs.

Suggested Guidelines for Local Implementation

Identifying and Planning for Students with Exceptional Needs

- Develop a Learning Support Team (or other name).
- The role of this team is to serve as a support for our classroom teachers and parents in the identification and service of students with academic, behavioral, emotional or physical differences.
- Each school's Learning Support Team creates, publishes and implements a specific process for identifying incoming and existing students who may have exceptional needs.
- The Learning Support Team may request additional diagnostic information (i.e. psycho-educational assessment) for a student at any time to better develop an appropriate program for that student. The Learning Support Team may choose to initiate **instructional accommodations** and other support services (extra tutoring etc.) without formal assessment. However, it is recommended that a psycho-educational assessment precede and justify **curricular modifications** made at any grade level.

Assessment and Acceptance of New Students

- An entrance assessment should be used to identify the student's learning strengths and needs and in helping to determine whether an appropriate program can be developed. Schools should utilize a holistic approach in this assessment, which may include such steps as a review of previous documentation, academic screening, parent/student interview, and parish affiliation consideration.
- Acceptance of an accommodated student into a diocesan high school is, likewise, always determined on an individual basis. The decision should be made after taking into consideration parental **interviews**, previous support/interventions of the elementary/middle school, teacher recommendation, and the ability of the high school to meet the student's needs.

Documentation of Identified Students with Special Needs

- It is expected that parents of students with diagnosed exceptionality should fully disclose all documents with their application for enrollment.

- It is recommended that students with diagnosed exceptionality should be admitted on a probationary basis so as to ensure that the program placement can meet the needs of the child on an ongoing basis.
- A Student Support Plan (or otherwise named) is written following a collaborative team process (including teachers, school and outside support personnel and the parents) and documents any accommodations or modifications to be made for the student. This documentation is kept separate from the child's cumulative academic record, however, notation of formal assessments made or grades assigned while under academic accommodation or modification should always be noted in the cumulative file and be part of his/her permanent record. The Support Plan can be reviewed at any time by a parent/guardian. This record of pertinent student accommodations and/or modifications is a valuable resource when transitioning a student from one grade to another.

Standardized Testing For Identified Students

An identified student may qualify for standard and non-standard accommodations on standardized tests based upon the guidelines of the standardized testing program. Refer to the testing manual for a listing of standard accommodations. For a pupil to receive non-standard accommodations, the following must be in place:

- Justification for the accommodations (i.e. psycho-educational testing, district-created Individualized Educational Plan, local Student Support Plan, etc.) must be on file at the school site.
- Parents must be aware that accommodations are being made for their student and agree to the modified testing situation.
- The fact that ***non-standard*** accommodations were made for a child needs to be noted/marked on in the student's permanent school record.
- Interpretation of the student's scores needs to be made in light of the accommodations.
- Because non-standard accommodations invalidate the standardized integrity of the assessment, the test should be scored separately and results must be excluded from the general reporting process.

Assessment/Grading of Students with Special Needs

Grading of students with exceptionality should clearly indicate the level of curricular adjustment/modification and be clearly communicated to parents and future grade levels and schools.

Retention of Identified Students with Special Needs

A student with special needs should be retained only after it has been determined by the administration, teachers and parents that the student would benefit from another year at that grade level. This is done on an individual basis taking into consideration all factors affecting the student. Determination is made specifically in relation to the developmental level of the student and is not solely based upon academic performance.

8th Grade Diploma

Students who received instructional accommodations and/or curricular modifications may receive an official diocesan elementary school diploma. The determination is based on the individual student's holistic growth, based upon student learning aptitude, in response to the program provided.

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA / Transitional certificate

Include guideline here.

Alternative Educational Placement

An alternative educational placement may be recommended if the Administration, in consultation with the Student Support Team, determines that the school cannot continue to meet a student's needs. This is done after much consultation between the school and family, after every possible school and outside resource has been exhausted without success, and, after careful review of the school's ability to meet the overall needs of students.

Learning Support Coordinator

Each school should designate an Inclusion Coordinator (or similar title) whose responsibilities may include:

- Working with administrators, parents, teachers and others to develop and oversee the Diversified Education Program including the formation and functioning of a Student Support Team.
- Collaborating with teachers, students, and parents, and outside professionals as needed to maximize student success within the regular classroom.
- Working with small groups of students in specific academic areas.
- Assessing individual students' strengths and needs.

Learning Support Team

It is recommended that each school adopt a team approach in reviewing students' needs. The team could be composed of an administrator, Inclusion Coordinator, teachers, and appropriate school support staff (i.e. counselor) as well as outside professionals (as needed). The team should meet on a regular basis to identify students' needs, plan and implement interventions, and review progress.

Storage of Confidential Records

Confidential student information (i.e. psycho-education assessments, Student Support Plans, etc.) is to be kept in a file separate from the regular permanent record (cumulative file) consistent with archdiocesan policy. It is recommended that the cumulative file have an identification marking (such as a colored dot) identifying that a support file exists.

Learning Levels for All Students

For the purposes of this Guidebook, if a school finds it appropriate and helpful to identify or group its students using a tiered system, we suggest the following as the common terminology used in designating levels of student support:

- Level I: Minor or no changes to instructional program
- Level II: Instructional accommodations to teaching and learning
- Level III: Modifications to the academic program

A REFLECTION STATEMENT ON INCLUSION PROMULGATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

In their pastoral statement, "To Teach As Jesus Did" (1972), the National Conference of Catholic Bishops states that this document, "Will serve a useful purpose if it provides a catalyst for the efforts to deal realistically with problems of polarization and of confusion now confronting the educational ministry. In the year ahead, American Catholics should continue to articulate and implement their commitment to the educational ministry in ways suited to their times and circumstances." (p.2)

The National Congress on Catholic School for the 21st Century (1991) encouraged all Catholic school educators to open their minds and hearts and doors to an increasingly diverse world. Certainly part of this diversity is made up of children who have been gifted by God with special needs. Since the Bishops promulgated their statement, "To Teach As Jesus Did," Catholic schools have embraced the challenge to develop Programs for children and youth with special learning needs. Most often this was accomplished through resource rooms and pullout programs. Now, Catholic schools are challenged once again to respond to societal and educational changes. The onset of the philosophy of inclusion has changed the manner in which teachers educate children with special needs.

The Department of Elementary Schools supports the concept of appropriate inclusion. Appropriate inclusion recognizes and affirms the unique learning styles of students with varying exceptionalities. It is within this context that children with special needs are welcomed into the Catholic school community. Catholic elementary schools recognize their responsibility to provide a learning environment that fosters growth and considers the individual needs of the child. To the extent possible, Catholic elementary schools will serve children with special needs in general education classes.

The Department of Elementary Schools recognizes that inclusion is a process. It involves the ability to communicate with a group of learners with diverse needs. Inclusion is not a program or a placement. Inclusion is a philosophy of teaching that relies on the abilities of educators to promote an environment that respects and reverences the rights of all students to learn in regular education classrooms in Catholic Schools.

Inclusion fosters collaboration-general and special education teachers, with parents working together for the common good of all students, especially those with varying exceptionalities. Inclusion implies preparedness. Continuing education and ongoing communication are its hallmarks.

The Department of Elementary Schools recognizes that appropriate inclusion can work effectively for a large number of students with disabilities and learning difficulties while enriching the classroom experience of all students. The Department of Elementary Schools acknowledges that promoting appropriate inclusion without providing the resources needed to make it work effectively for students and teachers, offers a false promise of improved opportunities for students with special needs and assures a strong possibility for disruptions in the learning environment. For inclusion to achieve its full potential in the classroom, a primary requisite is that the entire school community commit themselves to ongoing staff development that will foster a greater understanding and respect for children with special needs.

April 5, 1999

Definitions

The following terms may be helpful in successfully navigating the regional planning dialog.

Accommodations vs. Modifications

Accommodations are changes in how a student learns. Accommodations are services or supports used to enable a student to fully access the subject matter and instruction. An accommodation does not alter the content or expectations; instead it is an adjustment to instructional methods. Accommodations include differentiated teaching techniques and alternative classroom materials that do not change the basic grade level curriculum, but do make learning easier for a child or helps a child communicate what they know best. When using accommodations, students are expected to meet the grade level standards set for all students across settings.

Modifications are changes in what a student is expected to learn. Modifications refer to the changes made to curriculum expectations in order to meet the needs of the student. Modifications are made when the grade level expectations are beyond or below the student's level of ability. The changes are made to provide a student opportunity to participate meaningfully and productively, along with other students, in classroom and school learning experiences. Modifications can include changes in delivery, content, or instructional level of a subject or test. Expectations are altered; performance criteria or academic grade level standard may also reflect changes.

General Inclusive Terminology:

Ability Grouping

Students put in groups by need, ability or interest. Groups can be formed and reformed to meet varied instructional purposes. All students need to participate in both homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping patterns.

Achievement Tests

Measures of acquired knowledge in academic skills, such as reading, math, writing, and science.

Advanced Placement

A program in which a secondary student can gain college credit and/or advanced college placement. Students in Advanced Placement classes must meet a level of criteria established by higher education institutions on a nationally given and scored Advanced Placement examination.

Advocacy

Recognizing and communicating needs, rights, and interests on behalf of the child; making informed choices.

Assessment

Process of identifying strengths and needs to assist in educational planning; includes observation, record review, interviews and tests among other methods of collecting information.

Assistive Technology

Any item, piece of equipment, or system that helps students compensate for specific learning deficits.

Authentic Assessment

Process of evaluating student learning using student products or performance instead of traditional standardized tests. Students are evaluated with regard to effort, their individuality and creativity.

Collaborative Learning

A teaching strategy whereby students are expected to share expertise (their area of strength) in order to reach a consensus or create a common product

Critical Thinking

Analytical thinking or methods of problem solving and decision-making, critical thinking uses specific attitudes and skills such as seeing others' points of view, and reaching sound conclusions.

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)

Assessment method to track student progress across curriculum levels, often on a week-by-week basis.

Curriculum Compacting

A process used to compact what students already know. It allows students who demonstrate mastery to omit portions of assigned curriculum, or to move more quickly through curriculum than would be typical. Students are thus able to "buy time" which can be used to accelerate content or to pursue enrichment activities while the unit is being taught to other students.

Disability

A physical or mental limitation to one's movements, senses or activities

Differentiated Instruction

Curriculum planning method for teachers to anticipate and respond to a variety of student needs in the classroom, often by accommodating or modifying content, process and product in the classroom.

English Language Learner (ELL)

Classification of student, who is not fluent, or cannot communicate effectively in English

Enrichment

Activities that supplement the core curriculum to promote student understanding or higher level thinking. Such activities are generally not specified in the curriculum and are selected by the teacher and/ or students in a given classroom.

Formative Assessment***Informed Consent***

Agreement in writing from parents that they have been informed and understand implications of special education evaluation and program decision; permission is voluntary and may be withdrawn.

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Disorders of the basic psychological processes that affect the way a child learns. Many children with learning disabilities have average or above average intelligence. Learning disabilities may cause difficulties in listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic. Included are perceptual handicaps, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Excluded are learning difficulties caused by visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbances, or environmental disadvantage.

Multiple Intelligences

The theory that intelligence can be expressed in a variety of ways and is not limited to the rational linear mode; the theory commonly associated with Howard Gardner identifies at least seven intelligences: linguistic, musical, spatial, logical-mathematical, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The newest multiple intelligence introduced the spring of 1966, was the gift of emotion.

Multidisciplinary Team

Professionals with different training and expertise; may include but is not limited to, any combination of the following public school personnel- general education teacher, special education teacher, administrator, school psychologist, speech and language therapist, counselor- and the parent.

Norm-Referenced Assessment***Norm-Referenced Test******Occupational Therapy******Physical therapy******Progress monitoring******Perceptual- Motor***

Muscle activity resulting from information received through the senses

Remediation***Response to Intervention (RTI)******Referral***

Written request for assessment to see if the child is a “child with a disability” who needs special education and related services to benefit from his/her general education program.

Rubric

A rubric is a scoring guide to assess learning. Each interval along the scale represents a specific level of learning from the beginner to expert. The levels of learning are accompanied by specific descriptors of the type and quality of work.

Self-Advocacy

Child’s ability to explain specific learning needs to seek necessary assistance or accommodations

Special Education

Common term for specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of eligible children whose educational needs can’t be met through modification of the regular instructional program; provides for a range of options for services, such as pull out programs, special day classes.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)***Speech- Language Pathology services***

Standardized Test

Student Support Plan

A specialized plan written for students who are parentally placed in private schools that shows goals and objectives for services that those students can access from the public schools (often speech/ language. Occupational therapy, physical therapy.)

Summative Assessment

District/ Federal Terminology:

American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Legislation enacted in 1990 to prohibit discrimination based on disability.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Entitles a public school child with a disability to an educational program and related services to meet his or her unique educational needs at no cost to the parents; based on the child's Individualized education program

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Federal law that provides for special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Written mandated plan to meet the unique educational needs of a child with a disability who requires special education services to benefit from the general education program; applies ONLY to children enrolled fully enrolled in public schools. Catholic schools NEVER author an IEP.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Federal civil rights law requiring school programs and buildings to be accessible to children with disabilities; protects from discrimination

504 Plan

An accommodation plan designed for students with medical impairments who are not eligible for an IEP

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)