

## EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

### Who Are Exceptional Learners in Catholic Schools?

Catholic education is rooted in the conviction that Jesus Christ provides the most comprehensive and compelling example of the realization of full human potential. (The Catholic School, 34, 35) From this emanates the belief that **all** students are exceptional in that they are made in the image and likeness of Christ and should have access to a Catholic school education. Catholic schools acknowledge that there are those students who require special services to meet their full human potential. Because of their Catholic focus, respect for the dignity of the human person, and commitment to justice, Catholic schools are uniquely positioned to meet their needs. As such, Exceptional Learners in Catholic schools are defined as

*Individuals with extraordinary learning needs manifested through academic, behavioral, cognitive, mental health, linguistic and/or social development due to physical attributes, learning abilities and/or specific linguistic needs. The term is intended to be inclusive and also meant to describe certain medical conditions, which may become chronic.*

Student service programs designed for Exceptional Learners may serve students with disabilities, gifted and talented students and English Language Learners. Based on the IDEIA, English Language Learners are not defined as an Exceptional Learner. However, due to variability from state to state and arch/diocese to arch/diocese, English Language Learners may be



included within the overarching umbrella of the local student service program and are outlined below.

#### Students with Disabilities

**Autism Spectrum Disorder, Deaf-blindness, Deaf, Developmental Delay, Emotional Disturbance** (e.g., anxiety, schizophrenia, OCD, etc.), **Hearing**

**Impairment** (NOTE: Auditory processing disorder is covered under Specific Learning Disability), **Intellectual Disability** (e.g., Down syndrome), **Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment** (e.g., Cerebral Palsy), **Other Health Impairment** (e.g., ADHD), **Specific Learning Disabilities** (e.g., Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, etc.), **Speech or Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment**, including blindness

<http://idea.ed.gov/>

#### Gifted and Talented Students

##### Giftedness Defined

##### National Association of Gifted Children (2010)

Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports).

## Gifted and Talented Students cont...

**State Definitions** – Nearly every state has its own definition. Not all states require that school districts follow the same definition. State definitions can be compared on the NAGC website.

**Federal Definition** - “The term ‘gifted and talented,’ when used with respect to students, children, or youth, means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.” (NAGC Website) [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)

## English Language Learners

### Common Acronyms

- English Learner (EL)
- English Language Learner (ELL)
- Limited English Proficient (LEP)

All terms describe a student whose first language is something other than English and have been identified as needing additional academic support

**Federal Definition** – means an individual

- a. who is age 3 through 21;
- b. who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- c. who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
  - i. who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and
  - ii. who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or
  - iii. who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and

who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and

- d. whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual –
  - i. the ability to meet the State’s proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in section 1111(b)(3);
  - ii. the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
  - iii. the opportunity to participate fully in society.

<http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/elme/federal-requirements-english-learners-webinar.pdf>

### Identifying English Language Learners:

#### Home Language Survey (HLS)

- What was the first language learned?
- What language does the student use most often?
- What language is used in the home?

#### Primary or Home Language Other than English (PHLOTE)

Students identified through HLS or other means who will be referred for an English language proficiency assessment to determine whether they meet criteria to be identified as English language students in need of language assistance services.

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