



# **The Matthew Project:**

## **An Implementation Plan for Addressing the Needs of the Diverse Learner in the Archdiocese of Seattle**

*When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."*

**-Matthew 22:34-40**

Created for the Archdiocese of Seattle  
by the  
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*“You Shall Love Your Neighbor As Yourself”*  
**The Matthew Project:  
An Implementation Plan for  
Addressing the Needs of the Diverse Learner in the  
Archdiocese of Seattle**

**PHASE I FINAL REPORT**

**Introduction**

The goal of the Matthew Project starting in 2019 was to investigate what systems and best practices are in place in the Archdiocese of Seattle in regard to serving students with disabilities in order to improve and increase that service. The Diversified Learners Committee has been influential in the Archdiocese in making progress toward this goal. The Matthew Project Phase I included surveys sent to parents, teachers, administrators, and pastors, a review of Archdiocesan documents, focus-group interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators, and meetings with the Diversified Learners Committee.

The ultimate goals of this project are to determine where schools are now in terms of serving students with disabilities and how to support the schools’ progress from “Exploring” to “Sustaining.”

**Phase I Objectives**

Phase I:

- Gathers evidence about current perceptions about programming for students with disabilities in Catholic schools among various constituency groups within the Archdiocese.
- Identifies current **s**trengths, **c**hallenges, **o**ptions, **r**esponses, and **e**ffectiveness (SCORE) for diocesan approaches for serving students with disabilities.
- Drives capacity-building efforts by identifying a system to categorize based on readiness levels of schools in inclusionary approaches.

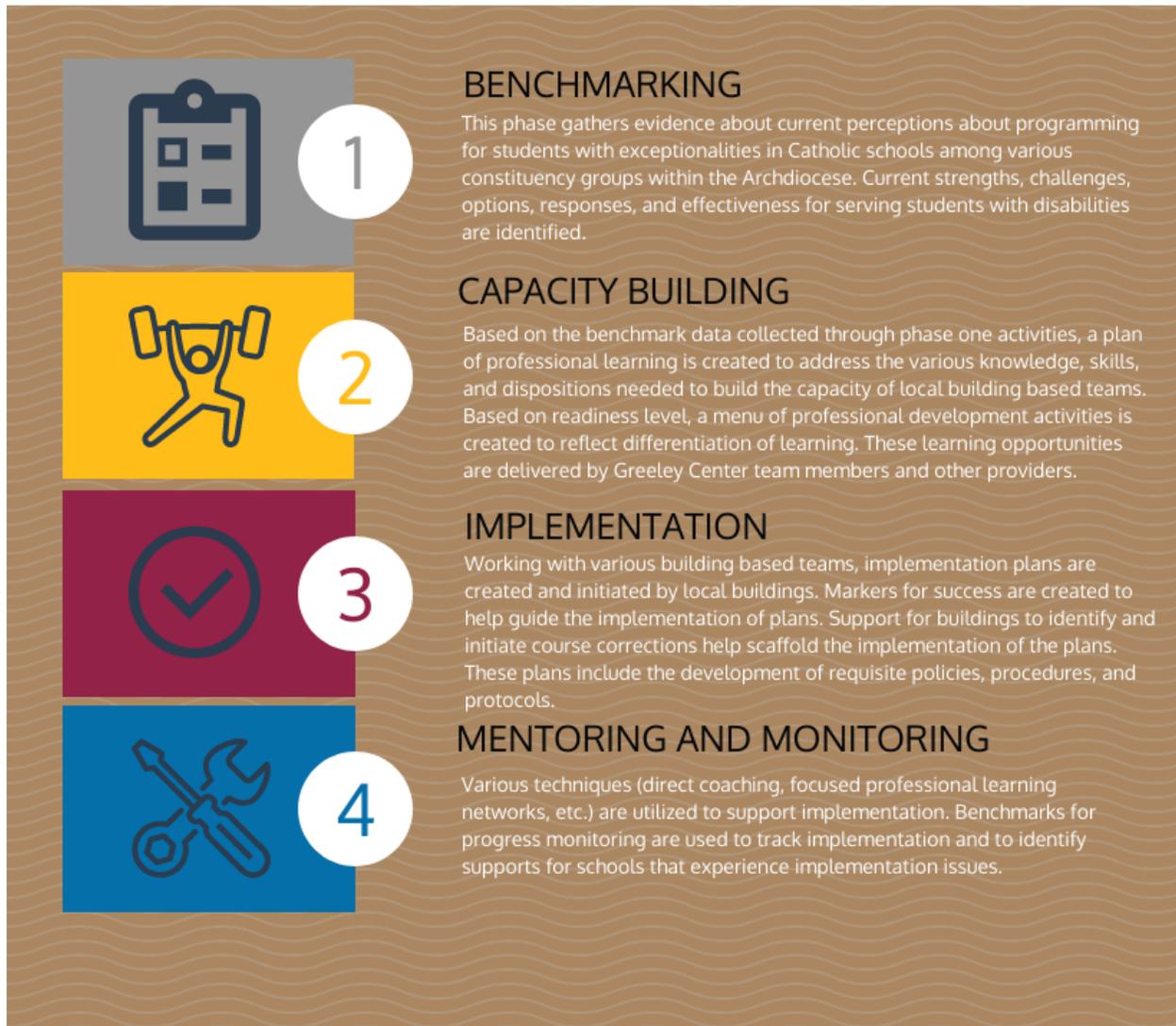


Figure One: Diverse Learner Implementation Plan

## Phase I Methodology

The Greeley research team collected perception and implementation data using a variety of research methods: focus group interviews, planning discussions with the Diversified Learners Committee, a document analysis, and surveys of stakeholder groups.

**Focus group interviews:** In March 2021, nine focus group interviews were conducted online consisting of 17 parents (12 from elementary schools and five from high schools), three teachers (two from elementary schools and one from a high school), and four elementary school administrators, see Table 1. In May 2021, a second round of focus groups included one high school and three elementary teachers, four elementary administrators, and two elementary parents. The approximately one-hour focus group interviews used a protocol for each stakeholder group, see Appendix 1.

Table 1. Number of focus group participants by stakeholder group and by region

Region	School Type	Administrators	Teachers	Parents	Total by region
Eastside	Elementary	0	1	3	4
	High School	0	0	1	1
Northern	Elementary	0	0	1	1
	High School	0	0	0	0
Olympic	Elementary	0	0	0	0
	High School	0	0	0	0
North Seattle	Elementary	1	0	4	5
	High School	0	0	1	1
Pierce	Elementary	2	0	0	2
	High School	0	0	0	0
South Seattle	Elementary	1	0	1	2
	High School	0	0	1	1
South King	Elementary	0	0	0	0
	High School	0	1	2	3
Southern	Elementary	0	0	0	0
	High School	0	0	0	0
South Sound	Elementary	0	1	1	2
	High School	0	0	0	0
Total by stakeholder group	Elementary	4	2	10	
	High School	0	1	5	

**Planning Discussions with Diverse Learners Committee:** Members of the Diverse Learners Committee shared insights and perceptions about inclusive practices at the school-level and Archdiocesan-level with the research team.

**Document analysis policies, procedures, and protocols:** A document analysis protocol, Appendix 2, was used to examine 21 documents and policies whereby each document or policy was analyzed by at least two researchers. The analysis focused on how the Office of Catholic Schools supports schools' inclusionary practices.

**Stakeholder Surveys:** Between February 12 to March 15, 2021, an online survey was administered to parents, teachers, and administrators as stakeholder groups. When the survey window was closed, 62 administrators answered the survey of which 43 were principals, 13 assistant principals, 2 department chairs, 1 learning specialist, and 3 learning support specialists. A total of 358 teachers responded to the survey, of which 254 identified as elementary school teachers and 104 as high school teachers. A total of 1,049

parents responded to the survey, of which 690 respondents identify as having a child in elementary school while 359 parents identify as having a child in high school. Table 2 shows the percent of survey respondents by stakeholder group and by region.

Table 2. Percent of survey respondents by stakeholder group and by region

Region	Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Eastside	10%	15%	21%
Northern	10%	8%	3%
Olympic	2%	2%	2%
North Seattle	24%	25%	20%
Pierce	9%	9%	17%
South Seattle	19%	18%	12%
South King	12%	11%	8%
Southern	3%	5%	5%
South Sound	10%	7%	11%

**Findings**

The Greeley research team identified **S**trengths, **C**hallenges, **O**ptions, **R**esponses, and **E**ffectiveness using the SCORE protocol.

**Strengths**

The strengths section identifies existing capabilities and resources as an inventory of assets to be leveraged to respond to challenges and opportunities.

There are six strengths that emerge as themes from the data:

- 1) Culture, mission, and vision are rooted in Catholic Social Teaching
- 2) Many schools have problem-solving teams in place to support the implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- 3) Schools have several components in place to partner with the district and parents to support students with disabilities in Catholic schools
- 4) The Diversified Learners Committee
- 5) Collaboration among the schools, LEAs, teachers, and parents
- 6) Teachers use core learning standards and written curriculum plans

## Strength #1 Culture, mission, and vision are rooted in Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic schools must embrace inclusion within their mission, believing that “Catholic schools *can* and *should* provide services to students with disabilities” (Boyle, 2018, p. 25). This includes understanding how Catholic Social Teachings call Catholic schools to uphold the dignity of all persons, provide preferential options for the poor and marginalized and embrace the solidarity of our human family. When it comes to culture, mission, and vision, stakeholders report the mission of the Archdiocese of Seattle is rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. The majority of administrators, 80%, identified that the leadership team understands the connection between Catholic Social Teaching and addressing the needs of students with disabilities. Similarly, survey results show that 74% of elementary school teachers and 53% of high school teachers understand the connection between Catholic Social Teaching and addressing the needs of students with disabilities. Administrators identified strong school culture when it comes to inclusion, with 77% of administrators stating their school culture is one of shared responsibility for student success and over 90% of administrators felt that their school culture reflects the belief that every student is unique and unrepeatable. About 70% of elementary school administrators and over 90% of high school administrators agree or strongly agree that the school has written statements of mission, vision, and educational philosophy that are aligned with inclusion of all students.

Evidence shows school leadership teams understand how disabilities impact learning in a variety of manners. Sixty-eight percent of elementary school administrators and 93% of high school administrators agree or strongly agree that they have established practices, requirements, and strategies to reduce barriers to serving students with disabilities in place. Additionally, slightly over 50% of parents agree or strongly agree that the schools understand the nature of their child’s disability. Further, 74% of elementary school administrators and 93% of high school administrators identify that the leadership team uses a ministerial approach to serving students with disabilities and their families.

A positive and consistent system to support student behavior is an indicator of a culture to support inclusion. Teacher survey results show 72% of elementary and 49% of high school teachers identify their school having three to five school-wide behavioral expectations that are agreed upon by staff. Sixty-one percent of elementary school teachers and 49% of high school teachers share that their school has a system to teach behavioral expectations to students, Over 94% of parents share that the school has behavioral expectations for students, 86% of elementary school parents and 74% of high school parents identify that the school communicates information about their child's behavior.

A culture that engages parents as the primary educators is essential to an inclusive school. When it comes to parental involvement, parent survey results show 80% of elementary

school parents and 71% of high school parents identify that teachers keep them informed regularly of how their child is being graded and help them understand their child's progress. Seventy-five percent of elementary school teachers and high school teachers share that parents are involved in the intervention process when students are not making progress.

### **Strength #2 Many schools have problem-solving teams in place to support the implementation of MTSS**

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) requires that schools have established problem-solving teams that work to identify students who are not making adequate progress and support teachers in implementing interventions to address student needs. Seventy-four percent of elementary school administrators and 80% of high school administrators identify as having a problem-solving team, while 60% of elementary school teachers and 64% of high school teachers identify having them. Further, 68% of elementary school administrators and 86% of high school administrators have a problem-solving protocol to initiate and monitor intervention plans, and this protocol is implemented with fidelity. Over 50% of elementary and high school teachers identify that the interventions/accommodations that are developed are reviewed on a regular basis to determine if the intervention/accommodation should be continued or modified. Also, teacher survey results show that follow-up meetings are held with referring teachers to monitor progress by 52% of elementary school teachers but only by 36% of high school teachers. These data mean that administrators identify that schools have problem-solving teams, but teachers report that these teams don't regularly review the effectiveness of interventions/accommodations.

### **Strength #3 Schools have several components in place to partner with the district and parents to support students with disabilities in Catholic schools**

In serving students with disabilities in Catholic schools, it is essential to have a process in place for case management including referring students for evaluation, partnering with the Local Education Agency (LEA) in the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), converting IEPs to service plans, implementing goals, accommodations, and modifications with fidelity, and monitoring and engaging in re-evaluation. Teacher survey results show 49% of elementary school teachers and 51% of high school teachers identify that a team meets on a regular basis to process special education referrals and to monitor interventions and accommodations. However, over 35% of teachers of both types identify not having one. Despite the fact that some schools may not have teams in place to monitor the support provided to students with disabilities, 78% of elementary school teachers participate in developing and implementing accommodations and modifications to mitigate the impact of the disability, with 59% of high school teachers participating.

Evidence also shows that 69% of elementary school teachers and 71% of high school teachers understand how to read an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) compared to 65% of elementary school administrators and 66% of high school administrators who believe the leadership team and teachers are trained to read an IEP. More than 56% of elementary and high school teachers have access to internal documents, such as accommodation plans, to inform instructional practice. Archdiocesan support documents have also been developed to facilitate conversations between Catholic schools and the LEA such as the Consultation Checklist for Special Services for Parentally-Placed Private School Children with Disabilities. The document analysis revealed this document to be closely aligned with the IDEA provisions for non-public schools. Parent survey results show 83% of elementary school parents and 55% of high school parents agree or strongly agree that teachers work as a team to help their child learn. Despite the fact that 44% of elementary school administrators identify not having a written policy about parental participation in the process of developing plans for educating students with disabilities, over 71% of parents from both school types identify that the school invites parents to participate in their child's accommodation/intervention plan.

#### **Strength #4 The Diversified Learners Committee**

The Diversified Learners Committee is a strength within the Archdiocese of Seattle, serving as a network for leaders committed to inclusion and leading the effort to collaborate and create systems to support students with disabilities in the schools. The DLC has produced the Diversified Learners Handbook and the 2018 DLC Implementation Plan, among other resources, to support best practices for inclusion. For example, the DLC Implementation Plan is a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support template that allows all schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their MTSS in the three tiers in various areas of programming. The DLC Trello Board evidences how the committee provides resources and collaborative space for the administrators and teachers of the Archdiocese of Seattle. The DLC empowers teacher leaders at their local schools while also collaborating at an Archdiocesan level. One elementary principal made the following observation about the DLC in a focus group, "The DL Committee is a nice resource and support. It's unique, other dioceses don't necessarily have it. The prominence of this gives schools added leverage to help push schools to grow in this area. The DLC creates local advocates for the work too. This is wonderful to keep this a focus."

#### **Strength #5 Collaboration among the schools, LEAs, teachers, and parents**

Collaboration, within the school, between school and families, and between the school and the LEA are all crucial to the success of an inclusive Catholic school. The data collected validated collaboration between the Catholic schools and the local education agencies as well as collaboration within the school among teachers and with parents. Administrator survey results show collaboration between Catholic school administrators and local public school entities with 89% of elementary school administrators and 71% of high school administrators identifying as having relationships with local public school entities.

The surveys provided evidence of collaboration among teachers at both the elementary and high school level. However, the use of data to drive decisions to support students is more prevalent at the elementary level. A majority of elementary school teachers, 71%, and high school teachers, 69%, indicate they have dedicated time to collaborate with colleagues on pedagogical practices and data analysis. The majority of elementary school teachers, 73%, share that data is used to identify students in need of targeted interventions compared to 43% of high school teachers. When it comes to using data to track the progress of students who are not making progress, 71% of elementary school teachers do so while only 53% of high school teachers identify doing so.

There is evidence that schools engage parents in the problem-solving process. When it comes to involving parents when a student is not making progress, 70% of elementary school parents and 60% of high school parents agree or strongly agree being involved and that the school identifies when students are not making progress.

### **Strength #6 Teachers use core learning standards and written curriculum plans**

Inclusionary practice requires that schools have a guaranteed and viable curriculum (Marzano, 2003) in place. This ensures that all students have equal access to a high-quality, aligned curriculum at the MTSS Tier 1 level. Teacher survey results show a majority of teachers in elementary schools, 86%, and high schools, 70%, teach core learning standards. Additionally, 75% of elementary school teachers and 74% of high school teachers identify having curriculum maps, year-long plans, and unit plans.

### **Challenges**

The challenges section identifies the issues and capabilities that need to be addressed by schools or the system. This section defines the skills and services as the content for the change-roadmap.

When it comes to challenges facing schools in supporting the needs of students with disabilities, the evidence supports six challenges.

- 1) A lack of understanding of the referral process and intervention protocol for a student not making adequate progress within the RtI/MTSS problem-solving teams

- 2) Limited classroom-level implementation of Universal Design for Learning , and accommodations/modifications for students with disabilities
- 3) A lack of school-wide evaluation, planning, and policy development related to serving students with disabilities
- 4) A need for professional learning for teachers and administrators on intervention, accommodation, modification, and progress monitoring on high-incidence disabilities
- 5) A process to collect and evaluate system- level data about students with disabilities is lacking
- 6) School-level specialized staffing resources to support classroom-level interventions are limited

**Challenge #1 A lack of understanding of the referral process and intervention protocol for a student not making adequate progress within the RtI/MTSS problem-solving teams**

As indicated in the Strengths section, many schools within the Archdiocese of Seattle have teams in place for RtI/MTSS problem-solving, which accept referrals for students who are not making expected progress. However, the survey data suggests that there is not a common understanding for the processes which direct the work of those teams among stakeholders. Only 55% of elementary school teachers and 56% of high school teachers identify that a standard intervention protocol exists for students not making progress.

Similarly, parents are unsure of the processes which exist with survey results showing that 66% of parents of elementary school students and 57% of parents of high school students have no familiarity or slight familiarity with the school’s referral process for an accomodation/intervention plan to be made. Root-cause analysis is a method used to identify student barriers to achieving academic or behavior expectations. Administrator survey results show that 50% of elementary school administrators identify not using a root cause analysis, compared to 13% of high school administrators who identify the same.

Data collection is essential for teachers to identify interventions, accomodations, modifications, and for progress monitoring. When it comes to analyzing student data in collaborative teams, 64% of elementary teachers identify having time to do so compared to only 37% of high school teachers. Furthermore, 79% of elementary teachers share that data is readily available compared to only 39% of high school teachers. Survey results show a statistical significant difference between elementary and high school teachers having access to data; 10% of elementary school teachers identify that data is not yet available or are exploring having data, compared to 37% of high school teachers. Moreover, only 40% of elementary school teachers and 48% of high school teachers identify the school having an explicit system to collect data on student behavior.

For some students not making progress with research-based interventions, a next step is taken to refer the child for an evaluation for special education. Teachers at both the elementary and high school levels are unaware of the existence of a special education referral process. While 62% of elementary school teachers and 44% of high school teachers identify that a standard special education referral process exists, 25% of elementary school teachers and 42% of high school teachers identify not having one.

### **Challenge #2 Limited classroom-level implementation of Universal Design for Learning and accommodations/modifications for students with disabilities**

Teachers can make specific decisions to make learning more accessible for all students, both those with disabilities and those without. Universal Design for Learning is a framework which makes learning more accessible to students by offering varied ways for students to process information and express their understanding. Only 40% of elementary school teachers and 43% of high school teachers report using principles of Universal Design for Learning in their classrooms. Parent survey responses and focus groups presented evidence that parents see further opportunity for classroom level accommodations and interventions to support diverse learners. Parent survey results show that 66% of elementary school parents and only 48% of high school parents agree or strongly agree that teachers meet their child's needs by personalizing instruction or providing flexible ways for the student to access materials to show what the student knows.

In focus groups, parents at both the elementary and high school levels reported dissatisfaction with their child's accommodation plans. They expressed being unsure if some teachers were unwilling or just not knowledgeable about how to provide accommodations or interventions for their child. Parents at both levels expressed that the accommodation of providing extra time seemed to be overused by teachers especially for students with attention or executive functioning challenges, even after the intervention has been demonstrated to be ineffective. Despite the parents' in-depth knowledge of their child's disability, some parents in focus groups expressed feeling unheard during meetings related to their child. One elementary parent in a focus group, however, did share a success about how her child requested an accommodation (to break down the parts of a problem-solving task) and the parents followed up, and that there was an immediate positive result for the child when the accommodation was implemented.

### **Challenge #3 A lack of school-wide evaluation, planning, and policy development related to serving students with disabilities**

A commitment to serving students with disabilities must be reflected in school-wide practices of evaluation, strategic planning, and policy development. The survey results indicate that only 61% of elementary school administrators identify that the leadership team uses a process to assess how the needs of students with disabilities are met. High school administrators report higher levels with 80% identifying that the leadership team uses a process to assess how the needs of students with disabilities are met; however, high school teachers and parents in the focus groups do not validate this survey finding. Only 44% of elementary school parents and 51% of high school parents agree or strongly agree the school's support services are effective, and over 34% of parents in both groups identify not knowing the effectiveness of these services. Parents and teachers had different information about what the public school system could provide. For example, parents indicated in focus groups that they have successfully accessed special education services through the public schools including dual enrollment where the parent takes the child to the local public school for services. This information surprised other parents, so it does not seem to be well-known to all stakeholders.

Written policies about the process of addressing the needs of students with disabilities seem to be lacking from the elementary school level but prevalent at the high school level. Only 57% of elementary school administrators identify their school has written policies about the process of addressing the needs of students with disabilities. In contrast, 93% of high school administrators identify the existence of these policies. Similarly, policies about the instructional supports that are required to support students with disabilities are identified by 87% of high school administrators but only 47% of elementary school administrators. Further, 29% of elementary school administrators identify not having a process of strategic planning and decision making for students with special education needs.

Administrator survey results show that while 53% of elementary school administrators identify the leadership team can support alternative service delivery models, such as inclusion or co-teaching, to address the needs of students with disabilities, 39% of elementary school administrators have leadership teams who do not support alternative service delivery models. This finding can be compared to 79% of high school administrators whose leadership team can support alternative service delivery models and 13% whose leadership team does not support alternative service delivery models.

**Challenge #4 A need for professional learning for teachers and administrators on intervention, accommodation, modification, and progress monitoring on high-incidence disabilities**

Teachers and administrators revealed specific areas that they feel are in need of further learning through the survey responses. Table 3 shows the level of familiarity teachers have with high-incidence disabilities. Survey results show teachers report being more familiar with Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Learning Disabilities (LD) and less familiar with Mild Intellectual Disability (MID), Speech Language Impairment (SLI), High Functioning Autism (HFA), and Emotional and/or Behavioral Disorders (E/BD). Therefore professional development could be beneficial to build teacher knowledge around specific disability types.

Peer observation is an effective system of ongoing professional learning in a school. If teachers have protected time and a structure to observe and provide one another feedback related to areas such as Universal Design for Learning, they can be motivated to improve their practice. The survey revealed that 42% of high school teachers have access to peer observation compared to 23% of elementary school teachers. Moreover, 65% of elementary school teachers identified that peer observation is not yet happening or it is being explored, compared to 42% of high school teachers who also identify the same.

While many schools indicate on the Diversified Learners survey that they utilize their Title IIA funding for professional development, they do not indicate the type of professional development they are engaging in. Evidence from the document analysis did not show a calendar of ongoing professional learning for teachers or administrators on understanding high-incidence disabilities, implementing supports for students with disabilities, or other effective frameworks for inclusion such as Universal Design for Learning or MTSS.

Table 3: Teacher survey- What is your level of familiarity with high-incidence disabilities?

Survey Answer	School Type	Emotional and/or Behavioral Disorders (E/BD)	Learning Disability (LD)	Mild Intellectual Disability (MID)	High Functioning Autism (HFA)	Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	Speech Language Impairment (SLI)
Not at all familiar	Elementary	4.7%	2.4%	11.2%	8.4%	2.4%	8%
	High School	4.9%	1.9%	11.7%	6.8%	1%	11.7%
Slightly familiar	Elementary	22.9%	11.2%	26.8%	21.1%	8.4%	23.5%
	High School	21.4%	7.8%	23.3%	21.4%	7.8%	28.2%
Somewhat familiar	Elementary	30.4%	17.5%	22.8%	25.1%	11.6%	29.9%
	High School	30.1%	20.4%	24.3%	22.3%	15.5%	25.2%
Moderately familiar	Elementary	30.8%	44.2%	28%	31.5%	37.8%	29.1%
	High School	27.2%	37.9%	27.2%	31.1%	40.8%	23.3%
Extremely familiar	Elementary	11.1%	24.7%	11.2%	13.9%	39.8%	9.6%
	High School	16.5%	32%	13.6%	18.4%	35%	11.7%

### Challenge #5 A process to collect and evaluate system-level data about students with disabilities is lacking

Evidence from the document analysis shows that the Archdiocese of Seattle collects data annually in autumn through the Diversified Learners survey, a summary of services provided using federal government programs such as Title funds. The open-response design of this survey makes it difficult to make any specific inferences based on the data since all schools provide different levels of detail on the “services through title funding” and “types of special needs served” questions. It is also difficult to determine what the survey respondent considers as a “type of special need” since some schools list broad terms, such as “psychological disorders” or “reading/math” and others list mental health needs such as “depression” and “anxiety” which may not be considered special needs by others. An improved design could include a list of disabilities to choose from and perhaps ask for the number of students with each need.

More specific data is collected through the Government Programs survey, however analysis of this data also provided evidence that the survey respondents have different operating definitions for the terms within the survey. For example, the survey asks for three numbers to be reported: 1) the number of students with diagnosed disabilities, 2) students with ISPs and 3) students with IEPs. For most regions, the number of students with a diagnosed disability is low, while the number of students with IEPs or ISPs is much higher. It is unclear if students are being double-counted within these categories or why the number of students with diagnosed disabilities is so low.

The lack of a systematic process for the Office of Catholic Schools to collect accurate and specific evidence on the types of disabilities schools support prohibits the system from utilizing federal funding to provide system-wide professional learning and resources. The document analysis did not show evidence of the system leveraging federal funding to support schools meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

### Challenge #6 School-level specialized staffing resources to support classroom-level interventions are limited

Evidence from each stakeholder focus group interview identified schools are challenged with specialized staffing human resources to support instructional interventions in classrooms, such as speech and language pathologists. In the absence of these specialists within the school building, parents could be leveraged to provide in-depth knowledge on their child’s disability. However, in the focus groups, parents reported not feeling heard by teachers and the school in the process to create and provide interventions. One parent shared, “In meetings, I am the expert on my child’s disability but my input is not wanted or utilized.”

## Options

The Options section identifies opportunities. Each opportunity ought to be judged if it has high impact and high feasibility. The Greeley research team has identified 13 options for the Archdiocese of Seattle.

**Option #1:** Leverage federal title funding for strategic professional learning and coaching related to inclusion. The document analysis did not yield evidence of the system pooling title funding resources to provide professional learning based on a professional learning needs assessment and analysis.

**Option #2:** Create ongoing implementation supports following professional learning opportunities to help teachers and staff with implementation efforts.

**Option #3:** Develop a plan for professional learning, particularly around the topic of inclusion. Survey results show teachers would benefit from trauma-informed education and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as survey results show that over 40% of elementary and high school teachers identify not using UDL as pedagogical practice as well as 48% of elementary school administrators identify not using UDL. Elementary school teachers also identify benefitting from Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). High school teachers identify benefitting from differentiation as an instructional strategy; and 76% have an understanding that differentiated instructional approaches may be required to address the disability's interference in learning. There is evidence of administrative support for professional learning. Administrator survey results show that 70% of elementary school administrators and 66% of high school administrators have leadership teams that support teachers' professional learning in developing accommodations and modifications to mitigate the impact of learning disabilities.

**Option #4:** Use an Archdiocesan assessment system to monitor the progress of students with disabilities. Administrator survey results show that 61% of elementary school administrators and 66% of high school administrators have a process to monitor the progress and effectiveness of intervention plans. While 23% of elementary school administrators do not have a monitoring process, only 6% of high school administrators report not having a monitoring process.

**Option #5:** Develop specific guidelines related to partnering with the district to access proportionate share funding. Strategically use federal Title funding, proportionate share, and grants to support schools.

**Option #6:** Create a process to “onboard” students with special needs to schools. Create a uniform process of informing parents of rights and services being provided. While 42% of elementary school administrators and 53% of high school administrators identify that the school has an induction process that supports the transition for students with special education needs and their families, 49% of elementary school administrators do not have an induction process.

Taking a stance of inclusiveness requires supports for general education students. While 42% of elementary school administrators and 34% of high school administrators identify their school having a process to provide general education students with coaching, support, and modeling to relate appropriately to students with special needs, 51% of elementary school and 46% of high school administrators do not have such a process.

**Option #7:** Develop consistent messaging and processes at a school-wide level to support the enrollment of students with disabilities. While 73% of high school administrators identify the school has an explicit script to handle initial admissions inquiries from parents with a student with a disability, which includes the ability to refer a parent to a point-person who answers the next level of questions, only 32% of elementary school administrators have such a script and 42% identify not having such a script.

**Option #8:** Develop diocesan policies that reference serving students with disabilities. Survey results show 44% of elementary school administrators do not have specific strategies to increase feelings of belonging for the student with a disability. The document analysis of the OCS Policy Manual revealed that there is a clear admissions policy allowing schools to make admissions decisions for students with disabilities based on the resources available. However, the language in Section 5.9 discusses students with IEPs but is not inclusive of all practices related to partnering with the LEA to provide services to students including accessing evaluation services and proportionate share funding for services for students enrolled in Catholic schools.. In the curriculum section, there is also no language encouraging supportive instruction within the Catholic school such as differentiation, accommodation, or interventions.

**Option #9:** Create a continuity student support system in the transition from elementary to high school for students with disabilities. Evidence from parent focus group interviews shows schools lack transition plans from elementary school to high school or from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten.

**Option #10:** Develop a specific Teacher Assistance Team process with established and communicated processes, templates, and tools to guide the work and education for teachers and parents on the process.

**Option #11:** Support in the facilitation to advocate for student support staff, such as therapists, psychologists, counselors, etc., between schools and the local education agency.

**Option #12:** Incorporate in new teacher and administrator orientations professional learning and/or the Archdiocesan vision for the “systemness” of inclusion of students with learning disabilities.

**Option #13:** Create a staggered, phased approach to implementation on serving students with disabilities whereby schools use a root cause analysis to identify current status and actionable next steps.

## **Responses**

The Responses section identifies the probable or emergent consequences of action and inaction from stakeholders. By acting on the options, the Greeley research team believes schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle will:

- increase teacher capacity and confidence;
- create meaningful partnerships with families with children with disabilities;
- increase access to funding and services through the local education agency as more students are identified;
- advocate for student services using a streamlined processes for identification, service delivery, and progress monitoring;
- increase student enrollment; and
- improve student outcomes.

The consequences of inaction are:

- teachers experiencing professional fatigue because they do not yet have the capacity or necessary resources to support students with disabilities who are accepted;
- families are dissatisfied with the quality of services the school is or is not providing, and will search for schools that can meet their needs;
- student enrollments are stagnant or decline which disadvantages the student-body and school culture with less diversity,
- misalignment occurs between the mission and vision of the Archdiocese of Seattle and Catholic social teaching.

## Effectiveness

The Effectiveness section is a Theory of Action identifying effective strategies, the impact of these strategies, and the outcomes they will have on schools and the system.

If the Archdiocese of Seattle....

- 1) Provides ongoing Professional Learning offerings on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) with the goal to develop a common understanding and language in terms of effectively leveraging these frameworks to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- 2) Develops an inclusion framework for more standardized systems for accommodations, interventions and progress monitoring - to be managed on the local school level but aligned to Archdiocesan protocols.
- 3) Develops a framework to support more standardized data collection procedures on the Archdiocesan level, specifically around enrollment of diversified learners and the services received by diversified learners.
- 4) Develops pathways or protocols to invite/engage parents in a comprehensive way from referral through intervention and progress monitoring.
- 5) Addresses Tier II & Tier III needs by expanding awareness of and access to a broad variety of accommodations and interventions to support the spectrum of diverse learner needs.

Then...

- 1) A common understanding and language in terms of effectively leveraging these frameworks to meet the needs of diverse learners will be established.
- 2) A consistent inclusion framework aligned with diocesan protocols that is flexible enough to accommodate each school's context will exist.
- 3) The services provided to diversified learners will be effectively monitored.
- 4) Parents will feel that they belong and have a role in the comprehensive referral, intervention process, and progress monitoring for a diverse learner.
- 5) Teachers and administrators will gain a broadening and deepening of pedagogical accommodations and interventions to support the spectrum of diverse learners' needs.

And we will see this result in....

- 1) Effective communication using a common language regarding serving the needs of each learner between professional staff within a school and across schools in the Archdiocese.
- 2) The Archdiocese will know the services schools are provided to organize quality professional development learning opportunities.
- 3) Teachers will use a variety of multi-tiered pedagogical accommodations and

intervention to support learners.

- 4) Meaningful partnerships will be created with families to support each learner.
- 5) Learning will improve for each student.

## **Research Limitations**

There are two limitations in this benchmarking: survey results and focus group interview participation.

Teachers' survey responses did not meet the 60% threshold to establish validity. Furthermore, two pastors who responded to the survey. Generally, the pastor is a significant stakeholder in a school and this voice is not represented in the results.

While each stakeholder group was represented in the focus group interviews, parents without a child with a disability did not participate and this voice is not represented in the results. Furthermore, the number of participants in each stakeholder group is limited.

## About the Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education

The Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education was established in 2003 by Michael J. Garanzini, S.J., then president and CEO of Loyola University Chicago, to leverage the resources of Loyola's School of Education and the University in support of improving and sustaining excellent K-12 Catholic schools. The primary work of the Greeley Center focuses on Catholic school excellence in the context of mission and Catholic identity, including sponsoring national conferences; conducting and leading on-site, tailored professional development sessions in schools and dioceses; coaching teachers and principals on instruction and leadership; and shaping Catholic school principal preparation and leadership degree programs at Loyola's School of Education. In order to increase the capacity of Catholic schools to serve those students with disabilities, the Greeley Center created the Leading Inclusive Catholic Schools certificate, the first certificate of its kind. The Center has established a national presence and led efforts to develop, publish, and disseminate such works as the inaugural *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (2012), the *Ignatian Leadership Inventory* (2019) a reflective leadership tool and several national whitepapers: *One Spirit, One Body: An Agenda for Serving Students with Disabilities in Catholic Schools* (2017), *A Systems Approach to Developing Leadership Paths for Catholic Schools* (2018), *Teacher Leadership: Leading Side By Side* (2019), and *Leading With Hope: A Reflective Guide for Catholic Schools in a New Reality* (2020).

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## About Loyola University Chicago

Founded in 1870, Loyola University Chicago is one of the nation's largest Jesuit, Catholic universities, with nearly 16,000 students. Nearly 10,000 undergraduates hailing from all 50 states and 82 countries call Loyola home. The University has four campuses: three in the greater Chicago area and one in Rome, Italy, as well as course locations in Beijing, China; Saigon-Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Vernon Hills, Illinois (Cuneo Mansion and Gardens); and a Retreat and Ecology Campus in Woodstock, Illinois. The University features 10 schools and colleges, including the Quinlan School of Business, Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing, Stritch School of Medicine, College of Arts and Sciences, School of Communication, School of Continuing and Professional Studies, School of Education, School of Law, School of Social Work, and Graduate School. Consistently ranked a top national university by *U.S. News & World Report*, Loyola is also among a select group of universities recognized for community service and engagement by prestigious national organizations like the Carnegie Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

## **Appendices**

[Appendix 1- Focus Group Interview Protocol](#)

[Appendix 2- Document Analysis Protocol](#)

[Appendix 3- Parent Survey Results](#)

[Appendix 4- Teacher Survey Results](#)

[Appendix 5- Administrator Survey Results](#)