

## **INCLUSION**

The Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Salt Lake City support the concept of appropriate inclusion in our schools. 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 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 schools will serve children with special needs in general education classes.

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 students to learn in regular education classrooms in Catholic schools.

Inclusion fosters collaboration of all teachers and parent(s)/guardian(s) working together for the common good of all students, especially those with varying exceptionalities. Inclusion implies preparedness, continuing education, and ongoing communication.

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 Catholic schools acknowledge 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) and staff commit themselves to ongoing education and staff development that will foster a greater understanding and respect for children with special needs.

Teachers question their ability to educate children with special needs. While it is true that special course work has a benefit, it is also true that good pedagogy benefits all children.

The Catholic schools offer a loving and safe environment. Catholic parent(s)/guardian(s) should be able to choose a Catholic education for their children with disabilities and learning difficulties. Children who have disabilities could be a gift to any school. They could teach acceptance of diversity, respect for all people and gratefulness for one's own gifts. It could be a win-win situation for all, especially the students.