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"To Include or Not to Include?" That is NOT the Question

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"TO INCLUDE OR NOT TO INCLUDE?" THAT IS *NOT* THE QUESTION

JEAN M. BARTON
Center for the Advancement of Catholic Education
Catholic University of America

Turning to psychological research, intelligence theory, and behavioral studies, this article offers practical advice for implementing an inclusive model of Catholic education. Field-tested models are discussed and suggested components for any inclusion program are provided. The article concludes with a vision statement for inclusive Catholic education.

At the beginning of the new millennium, Catholic education is at a crossroads. Not only must Catholic educators, like all educators today, confront the myriad of conundrums threatening academic excellence, but they also must confront the additional challenge of maintaining a strong Catholic identity in the schools. Catholic educational leaders might ask, "With all the pressing critical issues confronting us, can we afford to consider the issue of inclusion at this time?" Upon close scrutiny, the question is not simply "to include or not to include," but rather, "Can Catholic schools not be inclusive and still be truly Catholic?" In other words, does the idea of Catholic identity necessarily embody inclusion? This article will first examine the issue of inclusion through the lens of Catholic mission, history, and philosophy; next it will examine inclusion from the perspective of recent research and theories of learning, cognition, and instruction; finally it will propose a Catholic vision of how inclusion can be accomplished within a framework that integrates the dual goals of a strong Catholic identity and academic excellence.

INCLUSION AND THE MISSION
OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Unlike their public school colleagues, Catholic educators are charged with the mission "to teach as Jesus did" (National Conference, 1972)—an exciting challenge and an awesome responsibility. Understanding how this translates into everyday implementation of learning, curriculum, instruction, and school climate is at the heart of Catholic identity and the uniqueness of Catholic education. Yet there is no teacher's manual or guidebook on how specifically to create this faith community of learners. To a large extent, it depends upon each faculty's reflection on how the school's mission will be translated into daily practice. It means seeing and respecting each child as unique and unrepeatable; it means recognizing that each child has special, different gifts and that the school's job is to identify and develop those gifts in a climate where all gifts can be appreciated and shared for the common good. It means creating a climate where diversity is not just tolerated but celebrated and creating an instructional environment where all children can develop their unique God-given gifts and feel lovable, capable, and valued as contributing members of the community.

Reflection on the meaning of Catholic education affords further insight into just what the mission includes. Deriving from the Latin *exducere* meaning "to lead out," educating means "leading out" all of the potential within a person. Teaching is more than instruction, training, or imparting knowledge; it is formation that fosters the total development of each person. Educators become guides, mentors, and facilitators in an environment in which all gifts are nourished, grow, blossom, and flower as children become "all that they can be." Within this framework, the goal of education becomes far more than knowledge accumulation; it is a process of aptitude development. Adding the adjective Catholic to this meaning of education enhances an understanding of the mission. Catholic by definition means universal. The Church is universal; therefore, by its very definition Catholic education must be inclusive if it is truly Catholic.

Adding inclusion to the mission of Catholic education can seem somewhat daunting. However, it is not new. Catholic schools have always been inclusive given that they were begun in order to afford a quality Catholic education to all, especially those newly arrived immigrants whose socioeconomic, cultural, and language differences created significant educational challenges. Inclusion, then, is part of the historical tradition of Catholic schools from elementary through university level. Inclusion must continue to be an integral part of education that is Catholic.

In their 1990 statement *In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*, the United States Catholic Bishops reaffirmed their conviction from the 1972 pastoral *To Teach as Jesus Did* and invited the entire

Catholic community to join them in addressing the challenges that face Catholic schools. The mission has not changed. Inclusion must be one of the challenges toward which Catholic educators direct collaborative efforts. However, the mission is not overwhelming, nor is it an ideal goal toward which we strive, if inclusion is viewed not as another added task but within a vision of Catholic education that leads to both academic excellence and strong Catholic identity.

Recent research and theories from cognitive psychology provide a new lens for viewing learning and intelligence that afford Catholic educators a roadmap for translating the mission into educational practice. They suggest ways to create learning environments and devise instructional practices in which education as an aptitude development process can become a reality.

INCLUSION FROM A COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

A cognitive psychology approach to understanding learning and intelligence provides a basis for comprehending how students learn and for recognizing variations in learning that require differentiated instruction in a mainstream setting. A cognitive learning theory framework helps teachers better understand the learning process and assists them in identifying profiles of strengths and weaknesses. It also provides a context in which to critically evaluate practices and materials in planning instruction so that strengths are emphasized, weak areas circumvented, and successful learning and performance facilitated. Its underlying assumption is that all children can learn if the environment is adaptive. Such an attitude is critical in creating a positive, psychologically safe climate, where special needs students are not only included but integrated into a classroom setting. This framework is congruent with the current brain-based research that has generated innovative practices that are effective for fine-tuning instructional practice to make differentiated instruction possible for all students.

COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The undergirding theoretical framework suggested for understanding cognitive, academic, and social-emotional characteristics of all students is a combination of a constructivist (cognitive science/brain-based) theory of learning (Gagne, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993) and Gardner's (1983, 1993) Multiple Intelligence (MI) Theory. These theories are enhanced by principles derived from the work of Vygotsky, specifically those applied to education of various populations of at-risk students in a volume by Moll (1990) and from field-tested models described by Means, Chelemer, and Knapp (1991). This frame-

work has extensive support in the literature for providing successful results with special needs students in mainstream settings and has also been successfully applied by Catholic University of America Department of Education faculty in a collaborative Jacob Javits grant with the Montgomery County Public Schools (see Yekovich & Yekovich, 1997). Using this framework, school personnel worked collaboratively in problem-solving teams to analyze learning and teaching situations utilizing various instructional materials and practices to understand how they facilitated or hindered a student's learning and performance. They then designed curriculum, instruction, and instructional materials to match student learning profiles. The results were enhanced student learning and performance, a more positive teacher and peer attitude toward the previously struggling student as an able learner, and a reinforced sense of academic self-efficacy in the learner.

GARDNER: MI THEORY

Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory provides a new lens for viewing children who often do not succeed in a typical school setting. Defining an intelligence as the ability to solve problems or create products that are valued in one or more cultural settings, Gardner (1993) contends that intelligence is pluralistic. He postulates at least seven relatively independent intelligences (verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal), each with its own unique symbol system. Individuals have the capacity to use all seven intelligences, but differ in the profiles with which they are born and what they accomplish. The blend of intelligences in an individual makes possible the solving of problems and creation of significant products in any domain. Domains can be approached through one intelligence or a combination of intelligences and symbol systems.

Gardner (1983) further contends that intelligence is contextualized (cannot be judged/assessed independent of the environment) and is distributed; that is, it cannot be assessed independent of various resources or tools—including people, artifacts, and technology usually accessible to the individual. Each intelligence is not just a bio-psychological potential elicited by the environment; its development depends upon interaction with a rich context of culturally constructed activities which nurture the potential and allow it to flower. Thus, environments are adaptive in facilitating or maladaptive in inhibiting the development of intelligence(s). Educators, as creators of learning environments, are critically important in determining whether an intelligence or nascent potential will flower or wither.

This radically different view recognizes that different people have different profiles of intelligence, and requires a vision of school different from one where all children learn the same material in the same way at the same pace

and where progress is assessed by a standard, static, decontextualized instrument (Gardner, 1991). Gardner proposes an "individual-centered school" whose goals are to understand each child in depth, to provide opportunities for optimal development of the broad spectrum of human intelligences, and an optimal match (via an MI profile) between level of learning and teaching methods (Gardner & Boix-Mansilla, 1994).

Gardner defines understanding as the ability to apply knowledge to new situations. Learning with understanding is the goal of education, but it is hard to achieve because of "intuitive theories of the five-year-old mind" (Gardner, 1993, p. 111) inherent in all of us which can impede acquisition of domain-expert understanding if unconfronted. Given the pressure for coverage of content and the present kinds of teacher, standardized assessment further impedes development of learning with understanding. An environment which applies the principle of a children's museum where children can explore and "figure out meaningful problems" and the principle of an apprenticeship where children can interact with and observe an expert, practice, and receive feedback on their own attempts provides the bridge to education for understanding.

Within this vision, assessment should be "intelligence fair," that is, based on varied intelligences or symbol systems. A reflective understanding of students' differentiated intelligences provides the teacher with the information to create a framework within which each student may most effectively learn.

In addition to products created in a domain, process-folio and portfolio assessment document the history of the thinking about the project, the approach to solving problems encountered, growth of understanding, and a window into the child's mind for both teacher and student. Collaborative reflection and goal-setting by teacher and student provide an opportunity for modeling and scaffolding for the student. The process of scaffolding becomes internalized and helps students to take charge of their own learning, understand their own thinking, and become aware of their own growth toward expertise. Development of these personal intelligences, or what Goleman (1995) calls emotional intelligence, is equally or more important than the development of other intelligences. The development of emotional intelligence can often determine whether other intelligences will develop or be manifested. While important for all students to develop, the personal intelligences are critically important for special needs students; yet they are presently not addressed in most educational settings.

To implement inclusive education, teachers must carefully observe students and analyze their work. Teachers and students must define a well-delineated goal. Teachers must set benchmarks and create with students maps to move from one benchmark to the next. Teachers must agree upon criteria by which the product will be judged. The standards should be consistent across teachers within the school and shared with students. Not only does this

demystify the evaluation process, but it also provides students with a model of the goal to be internalized so it can become a standard for ongoing reflective self-evaluation.

Although Gardner articulates the alternative vision of education that his framework implies, it is clear that he is suggesting a new way to think about education. His theory becomes a tool for constructing a more pluralistic model to meet the unique profiles and educational needs found in any given setting. It provides an ideal plan for helping educators look at special needs students through a new lens. Perhaps, more importantly, it provides a rationale for overcoming the initial resistance to an inclusive model of many mainstream educators who believe that including these students will require a watering down of the curriculum or a lowering of standards.

It is critical that educators working in an inclusive environment maintain high expectations for all learners. MI theory helps educators understand that they can't assume a deficit lies in the child because they don't see an intelligence. It may be that the environment is not allowing the ability to be seen and nurtured because of a too narrowly defined instructional or assessment process. Finally, this theory challenges some of the closely held myths about intelligence that negatively impact teachers' expectations for students and themselves and helps teachers think about how to devise successful learning environments for a variety of students. Hence, it is ideal for an inclusion model.

VYGOTSKY: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The pivotal theoretical concepts provided by Vygotsky are the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and its role in adult-child interactions during instruction and in dynamic assessment, as well as the role of language and signs in mediated learning and development of higher-order thinking.

According to Vygotski (as cited in Gallimore & Tharp, 1990), teaching is effective only when it "awakens and rouses to life those functions which are in the state of maturing, which lie in the ZPD" (pp. 177, 201).

As Moll (1990, p. 3) aptly states, "What children can perform collaboratively or with assistance today, they can perform independently and competently tomorrow." For Gallimore and Tharp (1990), the ZPD is the central concept in their Theory of Teaching, one of the interconnected parts of their three part Neo-Vygotskian Theory of Education. They define teaching as "assisting performance through the ZPD at those points at which performance requires assistance. Teaching can be said to occur at that point in the ZPD where performance can be achieved with assistance" (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990, p. 200). They identify six means of assisting performance, not restricted to language: modeling, contingency management, feedback, instructing, questioning, and cognitive structuring. Modeling provides the behavior and standards to be imitated. Contingency management reinforces

acceptable behavior and eliminates unwanted behaviors. Feedback is a guide for correction and ultimately self-correction. Instructing provides the instructing voice of the teacher that becomes the learner's self-instructing voice in transition from assisted to self-regulated learning. Questioning elicits performance below the surface: it can both assist and assess. Cognitive structuring provides structures for thinking and acting by organizing, evaluating, and grouping perception, memory, and action.

All of these means of assistance must be individualized to a child's ZPD moment by moment in a dynamic interaction between teacher and student. According to Gallimore and Tharp (1990), "Productive interactions occur in goal-directed activity settings which are jointly undertaken by apprentices and experts.... The assisting expert...provides information relevant to furthering the apprentice's goal-directed activity" (p. 200).

Gallimore and Tharp (1990) also point out that teachers, too, have ZPDs and require assisted performance. Teachers must be provided with opportunities in activity settings for them to receive all six means of assistance in joint productive activities with a motivating product as its goal. They need to observe effective models and experience coaching with a skilled mentor as they learn to conduct "instructional conversations" (p. 196). These essential ideas of their Theory of Education have important implications for teacher training.

FIELD-TESTED MODELS: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

In addition to the foundational principles derived from these theoretical frameworks, several methods field-tested with at-risk students provide specific suggestions to facilitate translation of theory into practical application. Collins, Hawkins, and Carver's (1990) framework for designing learning environments to implement a cognitive apprenticeship identify the components needed to be incorporated on two levels, one for teacher development and one for student development within the respective ZPDs. Their model indicates the need to create the following opportunities:

1. Observable modeling by an expert of internal processes to provide a conceptual model of the processes to be acquired.
2. Coaching with gradual fading during each new activity with scaffolding, feedback, reminding, and hints as needed.
3. Articulation of thoughts during and after an activity.
4. Reflection to enable novices to compare their own problem-solving process with the expert until ultimately a cognitive model of expertise is internalized.
5. Exploration in which the expert pushes the novice into a mode of autonomous problem solving after goals and subgoals are set.
6. Gradual sequencing of the complexity of skills, the diversity of strategies to be applied, and development of an understanding of when and where each applies.

In their Reciprocal Reading model, Palinscar and Klenk (1991) provide specific information on exactly what the teacher should do to develop comprehension. Teacher and student should assume active roles through a structured dialogue. Four strategies routinely used by successful readers are developed (question generation, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting) as the text is read in segments. The dialogue provides explicit modeling of the usually covert processes used in constructing meaning from text in an interactive, socially supported context in which children learn from and about text. Control is gradually shifted from teacher to students.

Paralleling the strategies of Reciprocal Reading are key elements recommended by Bryson and Scardamalia (1991) for teaching writing to at-risk students:

1. Provide opportunities for imitating, practicing, and modifying a wide variety of discourse forms.
2. Make overt the covert activities by encouraging teacher and student direct modeling, thinking aloud, and discussions of specific problem-solving strategies.
3. Provide support for distributed learning in a dynamic social context by structuring the learning environment so that everyone is both a teacher/learner and a reader/writer.
4. Provide for cognitive scaffolding to allow practice of novel skills without overwhelming students.
5. Facilitate student-based ownership of an emergent learning agenda by having students set personally meaningful goals for writing and ensuring a genuine audience is available. (pp. 63-64)

Clay and Cazden (1990) show how Reading Recovery can supplement a classroom-based reading program in the early years to prevent students whose development lags behind from becoming poor readers. "Reading Recovery is a system of social interaction organized around the comprehension and production of text and demonstrably creates new focus of cognitive activity in the child" (p. 220). Attention of teacher and child is on strategies initiated by the child to get meaning from text. Readers learn to use and integrate four types of cues: semantic, syntactic, visual, and phonological. The goal is a self-improving system. Reading Recovery integrates whole language and phonics and includes careful observation and recording. The teacher works with what the children can do and interacts in the ZPD to scaffold them gradually to independence. Texts which increase in difficulty are continually selected in order to extend the ZPD; as progress continues the form of mediation varies. "Though Reading Recovery is most obviously and intentionally a program of instruction, it also can serve as a form of what Brown and Ferrara (1985) call 'dynamic assessment'" (Clay & Cazden, 1990, p. 220).

INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: CAMELOT OR REALITY?

Can Catholic schools afford inclusion and academic excellence and maintain Catholic identity? Is the goal realistic? Is it really worth the effort?

Catholic schools already have in place the necessary ingredients to do this. They have a philosophy which recognizes the uniqueness and dignity of each child; they have a supportive community that provides a rich knowledge base and the expectation that children must be responsible for their own actions, behavior, and learning; they have a philosophy that understands that education is not merely knowledge accumulation but formation. Catholic mission and philosophy support a vision of education as aptitude development. This recent research (also see Gardner, 1987) and theories in cognitive psychology provide a blueprint of how to implement curriculum and create a climate that fosters education as aptitude development. Not only is this framework congruent with a Catholic philosophy of education and with an inclusion model, but it is essential for children if they are to cope successfully with the world they will inherit. In a high-technology information age with rapidly accumulating information and change, it is impossible to cram into children all they need to know. Children must be taught how to acquire information and learn autonomously and how to apply knowledge to solve problems. All intelligences must be developed, but primarily the personal (emotional) intelligences. This model of education is congruent with best educational practice for academic excellence; it supports inclusion; and it is congruent with Catholic mission.

VISION OF INCLUSION MODEL FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

GOAL

Provide a climate where each child can develop personal intelligences, learn to capitalize on strengths, compensate for weak areas that might limit achievement and aptitude development, become an autonomous learner who assumes responsibility for learning and behavior, become intrinsically motivated, and believe he or she can succeed with effort and persistence.

SUGGESTED COMPONENTS

• Develop a climate where each child is seen as having gifts, not deficits.
• Don't label as handicapped.
• Find and develop strengths; teach to and assess through them.

- Identify weaknesses 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 and appreciates complementarity of different profiles.
- Adapt curriculum to student profiles; curriculum is "what"; instruction provides "how."
- Teach students to adapt themselves to task demands through use of strategies that work for them.
- See learning as a match between learner and environment; when a child is not learning—change the learning environment until the child can learn; don't label the child as incapable.
- View intelligence as dynamic, multifaceted, distributed, and contextually determined.
- View aptitude differences as changeable and not residing solely in the student.
- View success/failure in terms of person-situation interaction, relative to past/present learning.
- Integrate "assessment in service of learning" into all aspects to create an iterative process that directs instructional planning and design; assessment must be formative and include a dynamic interaction between adult and child that affords scaffolding, feedback, and modeling.
- Set individual versus competitive goals; define success as learning something you did not know before.
- Expect all to succeed and show them how; make academic success possible.
- Develop 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.

IMPLEMENTATION

If it takes a village to raise a child, it will take a united Catholic educational community to provide an appropriate Catholic education to a diverse range of learners, including a variety of "special needs students." This is not a task that can be delegated to a teacher in a classroom or even an individual school. To be done well, it will take a well-thought-out, coordinated effort among all levels of Catholic educators from elementary through university, long-range strategic planning at the diocesan level, and collaboration among dioceses.

1. Identify what we already know and are already doing well across dioceses.

Conduct a nationwide survey of what kinds of programs dioceses throughout the country have implemented to address special needs. Identify what strategies are working, what kinds of training and support are needed, and what models can be modified for use in other dioceses and schools.

2. Recognize that multiple models will be needed to address diverse needs and situations.

Catholic school populations are diverse not only between regions, but also within dioceses. Additionally, special needs students are a diverse group. What is ideal for a gifted student may be the antithesis of what a student with Downs syndrome needs. Special needs students are not necessarily "pure types" to be categorized and programmed for. Students may be both gifted and learning disabled, learning disabled and attention deficit, gifted and culturally and linguistically different, etc. Therefore, elements of programming need to be identified to meet different needs so they can be combined in different ways. Schools need to identify which kinds of special needs they can address successfully and what levels of severity they can handle. Dioceses need to create a "system of schools" so that all children's needs can be met within a Catholic educational environment. However, all kinds and levels of needs cannot necessarily be met in any one school. Programming available at both elementary and secondary levels must dovetail. Early intervention at preschool might also be considered. Models must differ for different levels, different special needs, and different contexts. Although general models can be shared as examples of "what works," models must be fine-tuned to different settings by local educators.

3. Professional development must be intense, ongoing, and multilevel.

Educators at all levels must be provided with a mental model of teaching, learning, and intelligence congruent with the theoretical and philosophical perspective outlined above. They need a clear understanding of the components of the learning process and a different view of intelligence so that they can devise alternative ways of teaching that match children's learning. Education within a reflective teaching model, which helps them to review reflectively, analyze critically, and modify teaching on an ongoing basis is critical. Without such a reflective teaching approach they will not be afforded the flexibility needed to adapt instructional practice to children's needs.

All of this cannot be accomplished in a one-time inservice program. Long-term commitment to ongoing, intense development of understanding and transfer/application to classroom practice is critical. Ongoing problem-solving and consultation with the principal, school colleagues, and col-

leagues in other schools is also paramount. Sharing and cross-fertilizing in a supportive network within and between schools and even dioceses would be beneficial. When what they've tried is not working, teachers and principals need to problem solve collaboratively with colleagues and with outside experts to devise alternative strategies.

4. Support is paramount.

If Catholic school personnel are to take on the challenge of inclusion, they must feel support at all levels. They must have the solid support of the entire Catholic educational community. Teachers must be able to turn to administrators at the local school level and at the diocesan level and know they will receive support to deal with issues they cannot resolve alone. Diocesan Catholic leaders must be able to count on university support to suggest best practices from relevant literature, to provide experts for consultative problem-solving, to help with strategic planning for implementation, and to conduct research to answer questions raised by innovative practices. Programs must be devised to provide for parent understanding and support.

A network of professionals must be made available both within schools and between schools to deal with needs beyond the training and purview of a mainstream teacher. Learning specialists and special educators, speech and language therapists, counselors, school psychologists, therapists, social workers, psychiatrists, and psychoeducational assessment services need to be identified who will work with schools, parents, and students. They can be hired by individual schools, shared between schools, hired by the diocese, or available on a consultative basis. The choice would depend on the needs and resources of each setting. However, teachers, parents, and students must have access to whatever level of expertise is needed. Access cannot depend on affluence.

SUMMARY

To be truly Catholic, education must be inclusive. "To teach as Jesus did" is not easy, but it is possible if we ask ourselves the right questions and work together as a community of learners on a quest for a difficult but not impossible goal. The goal is to develop the God-given gifts in each learner to the fullest and to help students to appreciate all gifts and celebrate diversity, seeing the adaptive benefit of "different gifts" as collectively complementary. We must begin by asking, "How is each gifted?" not "Who is gifted?" "How can we teach so each can learn?" not "Who cannot learn in our school?" "How can we work together to make inclusion possible?" not "To include or not to include?" If we ask the right questions and work together, we can create schools that provide a truly Catholic education for all students and are models of academic excellence for others to emulate.

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Jean M. Barton is associate director of the Center for the Advancement of Catholic Education at The Catholic University of America. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Jean M. Barton, Center for the Advancement of Catholic Education, The Catholic University of America, Cardinal Station, Washington, DC 20064.