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## Individuals With Disabilities Education Act: Guide and Toolkit (Book Review)

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## Individuals With Disabilities Education Act: Guide and Toolkit (Book Review)

Michelle Doyle

Arlington, VA: National Catholic Education Association, 2014

74 pages, \$20.00 USD Member; \$30.00 USD Non-Member (spiral bound)

ISBN Number: 1-55833-568-4 (spiral bound)

<http://www.ncea.org/store/detail.aspx?id=ADM-22-1529>

Reviewed by Alice Tesch Graham, Salve Regina University

**W**hy should this book matter to Catholic educators? In Catholic social teaching three themes—human dignity, full participation, and the common good—underpin the need to support children and youth with exceptionalities and their families. *In Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Guide and Toolkit*, Michelle Doyle painstakingly provides critical information about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as it relates to children with exceptionalities in Catholic education. As DeFoire (2006) has stated,

Catholic schools are not legally required to accept students with disabilities but doing so is consistent with Church teaching. Accepting such students, however, presents a moral dilemma to Catholic educators. On the one hand, admitting such students reflects sound Catholic teaching; on the other, it requires that the school be able to meet the needs of such students. (p. 455)

This book “is designed to assist principals with the processes involved when working with public schools or local educational agencies (LEA) to provide services to students with disabilities who attend Catholic school” (Doyle, 2014, p. iii). However, the book is even more than that. It is actually a guidebook and toolkit not only important to Catholic school administrators but also to teachers who have students with exceptionalities in their classrooms and to families with children who have exceptionalities and are considering Catholic education. When all stakeholders understand the

implications of IDEA and collaborate, the benefits are twofold: first, children with exceptionalities are supported, and second, Catholic education moves forward supporting all learners.

Michelle Doyle systematically deconstructs the legislation in a way that the reader can clearly understand while also providing tools necessary for accountability. She supports her work through resource links to the U.S. Department of Education, the Office of Non-public Education at the U.S. Department of Education, the Council for American Private Education, and the National Catholic Educational Association for those readers who desire additional information.

As the book has been written as a 74 page guidebook, every page needs to count. The reader discovers immediately that this is indeed the case. A brief historical overview of IDEA and a discussion of civil rights in public schools provide the necessary framework for the reader to move forward in understanding the non-public school setting components of IDEA. The phrase from IDEA “parentally-placed private school students” is introduced to the reader. This is a key IDEA concept that guides non-public school administrators. There are many tenets to this phrase that are unpacked for analysis and then implementation.

The author systematically takes the reader through the sections of IDEA that non-public school administrators have legal obligations to follow. The legal language is clearly explained with the detail necessary for the reader to know what actions are required in the child find process and in the determination of a disability. Next, the complex IDEA funding process using a statutory formula and all of its layers becomes transparent through details and examples. Also, the services to students with exceptionalities including service plans, locations for service, and transportation are specifically described.

IDEA provides specific details on the consultation process involving all parties – private, public and representatives of families of “parentally-placed private school children”. Since this legislation (IDEA) was written for public education, the bridge for legal implementation in non-public settings is through communication. The author makes this information applicable for the reader. One of the principles of IDEA is procedural safeguards. The author has specifically detailed how this should work for families of parentally-placed private school children.

As important as the first half of the book is, the reason Catholic school administrators must have this book is the tools provided in the second half of the book. The reader may be tempted to go directly to the tools section, but are advised to read the beginning of the guidebook first. The background knowledge from the beginning of the guidebook provides the reader the foundation to implement the process and products in the tools section. The tools are extremely valuable for Catholic school administrators to meet the requirements of IDEA. Twenty specific tools along with step-by-step guidelines and examples are provided. The significance of the tools is also high for teachers and families who will become informed participants in the process and procedures to be advocates for children with exceptionalities.

The first 14 tools support the consultation process for private and public school representatives. Checklists and agendas for meetings with timelines and sample letters are included. There are tools for data collection and funding calculations. Procedural safeguards and survey tools are also presented.

The last six tools are support materials for non-public school officials. These focus on outreach through brochures, referral information, aligning services and classroom instruction, and progress monitoring.

Michele Doyle's guidebook has merit. It is succinct with all the specifics the reader needs to meet the IDEA requirements in a Catholic educational system. It provides the knowledge and action steps for one cornerstone supporting children with exceptionalities in Catholic education. The other three cornerstones are teachers who provide inclusion, necessary financial support, and administrators with the vision and action plan to support all learners following Catholic social teaching.

One question remains, why has it taken so long for this guidebook to be written and published? The last major update to the IDEA legislation was 2006 and this guidebook was published in 2014. Denise (2006) conducted research about special education inclusion in Catholic high schools and suggested further research is needed with the ultimate goal being Catholic education availability for all Catholic families. Carlson (2014) bluntly stated, "It seems especially cruel that there are families who, through their parishes, support Catholic schools that their children cannot attend because of their disabilities" (p. 72). The hope of this book reviewer is that by providing necessary legislative information with tools for implementation, Catholic school administrators will have the tools necessary in a timely manner to move all learners forward.

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