

The Individual Catholic Education Plan: A Tool For Differentiation

The heart and soul of the Individual Catholic Education Plan (ICEP) lies in the belief that each student has very unique learning needs and strengths. The ICEP, as a tool for differentiation, can best be summarized in the words of Carol Ann Tomlinson, "Differentiation is responsive teaching rather than one-size-fits-all teaching." The ICEP is a blueprint for responsive teaching "by honoring each student's learning needs and maximizing each student's learning capacity" (Tomlinson, 1999). It is within this learning plan that individualized interventions and goals are developed for each student based on their diagnostic, summative, and RtI data. Following an evaluation, initiated either privately or through the public school district, an ICEP ensures that valuable diagnostic information, will not be lost in a file drawer, but rather included in an action plan that will assist the teacher in gaining a better understanding of the student's learning needs.

The ICEP was created over a decade ago for the schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago as a vehicle for successfully including students of varying needs and abilities within our classrooms. This document stands as a testimonial to the inclusivity of our Catholic schools. From its beginnings, this learning plan was intended to be user friendly. Thus, it has remained a very concise four-page document. However, within these four pages can be found a very comprehensive portrait of a student. Included within this document are interventions designed to support the student in the regular education classroom.

The ICEP covers the range of student abilities within our schools. It is written for students who are challenged in learning, as well as, those needing to be challenged within the classroom. The most unique aspect of the ICEP can be found in the Commitment Section, on the final page. This section outlines the responsibilities of each stakeholder in carrying out the tenets of the learning plan. The focus is initially on the student with the identification of three strategies that are critical to academic success. The responsibilities of each of the remaining stakeholders in supporting the student are then identified. In signing this document each person is accountable for supporting and implementing their share of the plan. When participants carry out their responsibilities, the student feels supported and better equipped to meet success in the classroom. It is the goal of our Catholic school teachers to help all students reach his/her potential and become lifelong learners, the ICEP makes this possible.

