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Dear Parents,

At Incarnate Word School we have a strong commitment to, and a long tradition of, doing our best to serve the unique needs of each of our students. This is not to say that we are always successful in this endeavor. It is to say, though, that we do try . . . very hard. Incarnate Word School teachers at every grade level, and in every subject area, continuously strive to differentiate and adjust their teaching methods to effectively meet the needs of each student, whether that student is excelling or struggling. One testimony to this commitment is the fact that Incarnate Word School has had a Learning Consultant on our staff for the last 17 years. The Learning Consultant's number one responsibility is to assist teachers in devising effective ways to meet the unique needs of each and every one of our students.

During the winter of 2016, Father Vowels and I were approached by the parents of three of our school families, each of which have a child with Down syndrome. These parents told us how important it would be, and what it would mean to them to have ALL their children experience the Incarnate Word School community. At the same time they began telling us about a foundation, called ***One Classroom-Inclusive Catholic Education***, that might be able to help us bring their children with Down syndrome into our school. *One Classroom* is a 501 (C) 3 organization dedicated to creating inclusive Catholic educational opportunities for children with special needs, like Down syndrome, in the St. Louis Archdiocese. You may have read about One Classroom in the St. Louis Review last year. In the fall of 2015, One Classroom helped initiate a pilot program at Mary Queen of Peace School in Webster Groves. After a successful launch, this program is serving four students with Down syndrome, and is now well into its second year. A few years ago, Incarnate Word had looked into the possibility of including students with Down syndrome in our school, but, at that time, we did not have knowledge about how to get started nor did we have access to experts who could show us the way to serve these students successfully. *One Classroom*, having accepted Incarnate Word School as another pilot program, will provide guidance, expertise, and even some financial assistance as we begin our own inclusion program for the 2017-2018 school year.

Inclusion is educating individuals with physical disabilities or intellectual disabilities in the general classroom, shoulder to shoulder, with their age peers. Whatever individualized needs a student may have are addressed in the classroom, and not by segregating the students from their peer environment. Students with special needs are educated in the context of an “inclusive service delivery model” that may include curriculum modifications, support from the general education teacher, peer students, a teaching aid, or specialized teacher. The expectation is not that the student necessarily maintains the same academic pace as typical peers, rather that the student maintains progress towards his or her own personal and individual potential. A large body of research demonstrates that children educated in inclusive environments achieve higher academic gains and achieve more success after high school. Research also demonstrates that typical peers experience improved academic outcomes and social development.

If any parish school would be able to introduce such a pilot program, we believe Incarnate Word is the place. Incarnate Word School has an exceptionally competent school faculty and caring and supportive school parents. Additionally, Incarnate Word Parish consists of generous and active parishioners. Ours is a school that could make Catholic education a reality for some Catholic students with disability whose families are already using our school. We believe including these three students with special needs, who happen to be siblings of current students, would be a huge benefit to the rest of our student body. All our children could better learn to love all people if they learned this first-hand in their own Catholic school. This program will surely benefit our brothers and sisters in Christ with disability, as well as bless our own current students. Periodically, we will keep you informed as we prepare to implement this new dimension in education at Incarnate Word School.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”
Matthew 25: 10

Father Timothy Vowels
Pastor

Mike Welling
Principal

Growing in Mind and Spirit.....We Live . . . Alive in Christ
Rooted in Family..... We Love
Nourished by Faith.....We Believe
Strengthened with Knowledge..... We Understand
Reaching for ExcellenceWe Achieve . . . Wisdom and Compassion
Bearing the Fruit of Leadership and ServiceWe Build the Kingdom of God