

Non-Standard Standards

Do We Need One Set of Standards for the System of Catholic Schools?

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Background

- **Assistant professor at Seton Hall University in the Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy.**
- **Research focuses on curriculum and assessment policy and practice.**

Just an Overview

- **Will ask some questions and provide some things to think about.**
- **Can't cover everything in 15 minutes.**
- **Hope to spark your educational imagination a bit.**

Comments and Contact

- **Comments come from my writings and my book. You can find some of my articles at my website www.christienken.com.**
- **You are free to use any resource on my website and contact me as needed:**

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The Need

- **Before implementation of an intervention there should be (1) an identified need for that intervention, (2) followed by empirical evidence that the proposed intervention will effectively satisfy the need.**

Where's the Need?

- **What data does the NCEA possess to demonstrate a need to standardize the academic pathways of all Catholic schools?**
- **I could not find any on the NCEA website**

Where's the Need?

- **Did all Catholic schools develop a universal set of standards during the NCLB era 2002 – 2012?**
- **Why or why not?**

Where's the Need?

- Did Catholic school students perform significantly less well academically during the NCLB era (2002-2012) to precipitate the adoption of the Common Core now?

What is the need and are there data to describe that need?

The Need

- The NCEA website uses the language from the CCSS website to describe the Standards but never mentions a need beyond the stock CCSS “globally competitive” and “college and career ready” phrases.
- Is there evidence that Catholic school graduates are less competitive or college and career ready? I don't think so.

The Need

- Catholic school systems deliver high graduation rates and higher percentages of students who go on to college and complete college.
- Has that changed in the last 2 years?
- It seems as if the non-standardized Catholic system works well for its children.

(Source: NCES/USDOE)

The Effectiveness of the CCSS Intervention

1. The CCSS have never been tested.
2. There is no clear evidence which standards are internationally benchmarked from which specific country and whether one can take disparate standards from multiple countries, out of the sequence used in that country and get the “same results” – whatever same results means.

The Effectiveness of the CCSS Intervention

3. Dr. Stotsky already called into question the quality of some portions of the Standards.

3a. Must all students really master ALL those standards?

I have additional questions to consider.

Questions

- **Where is the EVIDENCE that the majority of Catholic school students are not achieving to their potential?**
- **Where are the studies?**

Where is the evidence that just two subjects will prepare all your Catholic school children to access the thousands of college options or even make them attractive to the admissions officers that control access to those options?

Keep in mind over 800 colleges and universities do not require SAT or ACT – some very prestigious like Bard.

One Size Fits Less

What are students missing by being forced to focus so heavily on the limited curricula possibilities provided by the CCSS?

What are they not getting?

What is being crowded out?

What interests and passions are not being followed?

Where is the evidence that future plumbers, information technology personnel, graphic designers, certified auto mechanics, pastry chefs, entrepreneurs, teachers, home health aides, commercial airline pilots, film-makers, or the tens-of-thousands of other possible careers—some of which have not even been invented yet—will require mastery of the same curriculum with the same emphasis and at the same level of difficulty?

Where's the Evidence?

- **Are Catholic schools ready to abandon a large part of their sovereignty to be part of an untested system?**

- **What will REALLY make Catholic schools different?**

Frankly Speaking

- Some parents seek the Catholic schools as an alternative to the curricular programs in the public schools – certainly true also for non-Catholics that attend Catholic schools.
- Curricular independence from the public schools is an important draw – parents want something “different” not only spiritually, but also with curriculum.

Catholic Schools Can Do Better

- **Given the well known weaknesses and flaws with the CCSS, Catholic schools could develop more rigorous and spiritually meaningful programs locally.**

**“Customization of content without
Compromising quality”**

Non-Standards Standards: How?

- **Developmentally appropriate standards required for mastery (this would constitute your “tested system”) within a larger, customized open-ended curriculum based on the needs and goals of the Dioceses.**
- **Mandated, cognitively developmental, “Catholic content” that is tested in a standardized way within a much larger body of content chosen at the “local” level.**

Developmentally Appropriate

TABLE 5.6. Percentage of Students at Piaget's Cognitive Levels

Age	Grade	Intuition	Entry Concrete (a)	Advanced Concrete (b)	Entry Formal (a)	Middle Formal (b)
5.5	P	78	22			
6	K	68	27	5		
7	1	35	55	10		
8	2	25	55	20		
9	3	15	55	30		
10	4	12	52	35	1	
11	5	6	49	40	5	
12	6-7	5	32	51	12	
13	7-8	2	34	44	14	6
14	8-9	1	32	43	15	9
15	9-10	1	15	53	18	13
16	10-11	1	13	50	17	19
16-17	11-12	3	19	47	19	12
17-18	12	1	15	50	15	19
Adult	---	20	22	26	17	15

Open-Ended

- **Locally developed, socially-conscious problem based, project-based, scenario based curricula developed around quality content you choose for your students**
- **Appropriately designed problem-based and project-based activities are naturally differentiated and allow students of mixed abilities to work at their levels and beyond.**

Open-Ended

- **Already exist content guidelines from national curriculum organizations that Catholic leaders can draw on to create local curriculum standards that go beyond math and language arts and provide a well-rounded education.**
- **You don't have to compromise quality if you decide not to use the Core. The quality of the Core has not been validated...**

Open-Ended

- **Curriculum organized around open-ended activities within content areas allow for greater interdisciplinary studies and more authentic assessment options that can be customized to your students – not based on what one testing company thinks your students should know.**

Assessment Options

- **Social Sensitivity**
- **Ability to Apply Social Facts and Generalizations**
- **Democratic Values**
- **Applying Facts and Generalizations to Social Problems**
- **Evaluation of Social Attitudes**
- **Beliefs on Economic Issues**
- **Student Reaction to Reading**
- **Questionnaire on Voluntary Reading**
- **Critical Mindedness in the Reading of Fiction**
- **Judging the Effectiveness of Written Composition**
- **The Novel Questionnaire**
- **The Drama Questionnaire**
- **Evaluation of Literature**
- **Student Interest Inventory**
- **Socially Conscious Problem Solving**

Finally

- **Locally designed, globally informed: Set your standards locally to meet the needs of the students you serve.**
- **Draw upon all the content resources, not just one example (Common Core) to create a customized curriculum.**
- **Take what you want and what works for your students in the Dioceses and leave the rest.**

Finally

- It all comes back to need and the final questions of whether ALL students who attend ALL Catholic school need the same content, at the same level of difficulty, with the same emphasis in the same grade –
- What's the need?

Thank You!

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