

Common Core Statements From Various Catholic Dioceses and Organizations

**(Note: these documents have been copied from the designated web pages, some formatting has been modified.
Compiled by Dan Guernsey, NAPCIS 9-18-2013)**

NCEA

http://www.ncea.org/sites/default/files/documents/ncea_commoncorestatestandards_053113.pdf

Catholic schools have a long-standing commitment to academic excellence that is rooted in the faith-based mission of Catholic education. The Common Core State Standards in no way compromise the Catholic identity or educational program of a Catholic school. The Common Core State Standards initiative, begun in 2007, is a state-led, bipartisan effort that is not a requirement for participation in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) or any other federally funded program, and there are no mandates for any Catholic school to follow any federal rules if they adopt the Common Core. Adoption of the Common Core is voluntary; individual states, Catholic dioceses and other private schools make their own decisions about whether to adopt the standards. The Common Core State Standards are a set of high-quality academic expectations that all students should master by the end of each grade level. The standards establish consistent learning goals for all students that focus on preparing them to succeed in college and careers in a globally competitive workplace. The standards define and clearly communicate grade-specific goals and inform parents about learning outcomes, making it easier for parents to collaborate with teachers in helping their children achieve success.

The Common Core State Standards are not a curriculum. A curriculum includes what is taught, when it is taught, how it is taught and what materials to use. None of these items are included in the Common Core State Standards. For Catholic schools, all of these elements will continue to be determined by diocesan superintendents, principals and teachers working to meet the needs of their students.

The Common Core represents a fundamental shift in the teaching and learning process. The Common Core establishes clear, measurable goals for students that assist teachers in making instructional decisions. The standards place emphasis on creativity, critical and analytical thinking and application to curriculum content. The Common Core is not a national curriculum. It guides the way that instruction takes place in each classroom, allowing the Catholic school to develop its own curriculum content. An excellent Catholic school provides a rigorous academic curriculum that integrates faith and knowledge. As trained professionals, Catholic school administrators and teachers continually seek the best instructional methods for educating students. In the past, dioceses and schools have developed their own standards or adapted state standards for use with their own curriculum. Some will continue to do this

To assist those incorporating the new standards, the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) and partners in Catholic education established the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative (CCCII). CCCII provides resources to design and direct the implementation of Common Core within the culture and context of a Catholic school curriculum. Thus Catholic schools can infuse the standards with the faith, principles, values and social justice themes inherent in the mission of a Catholic school.

NCEA, the largest private professional education organization in the world, provides leadership, direction and service to its members through a variety of professional development activities that support whatever teaching and learning activities the individual school chooses implement.

NCEA POSITION -Video statement by -Sr. Dale MacDonald

<http://www.ncea.org/video/common-core>

NCEA ARTICLE AT FROM CATHOLIC TEACHER MAGAZINE

Embracing and Enhancing the Common Core in Catholic Schools *by Sr. Dale McDonald, PBVM, PhD*

The Common Core State Standards have been adopted by public schools in most states, and are at least under consideration if not already implemented by most U.S. dioceses. Learn about how these standards can fit with the unique mission of Catholic schools.

An excellent Catholic school has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st century skills, and Gospel values, implemented through effective instruction.
(Standard 7: National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools)

In the year 1844, with the Protestant majority controlling the public schools and under threat of loss of ability to hand on Catholic faith traditions, the Council of Baltimore mandated that each parish establish a Catholic school and require parents to send their children to it. In doing so, the bishops committed the Church to the establishment of a separate school system that should be in no way academically inferior to the public schools. Consequently, academic excellence has always been an aspiration and a hallmark of Catholic education.

For the past thirty years, the education reform agenda has focused on standards-based education as a means to remedy what the report A Nation at Risk termed “the mediocre performance” of American school children. Catholic schools have been part of that reform movement and worked to develop and adopt local and/or diocesan standards to improve educational outcomes for students. Today, more than 100 dioceses have indicated that they are adopting the Common Core State Standards and are adapting their curriculum and instructional practices to implement them effectively in schools.

Although 45 states have adopted the standards and have begun implementing them, there is still confusion and controversy surrounding them in the public arena and in the Catholic-school community. A few clarifications may be helpful in creating a climate of greater openness to the potential the standards have for impacting student achievement positively.

A strong impetus for national standards was the growing concern about the poor performance of American students on international assessments. On the TIMSS (Trends in International

Mathematics and Science Study), U.S. students in grade 4 ranked 11th in math and 9th in science and grade 8 students ranked 8th in math and 11th in science. The PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) results placed American 15-year-olds 14th in the world in reading, 25th in math, and 17th in science. A recent report, Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012, released by the World Economic Forum, placed the United States 26th in the world on measures of how well the educational system meets the needs of a competitive economy. The poor international performance of U.S. students has been attributed to the fact that all higher-scoring countries have national standards and assessments with rich professional development activities for teachers based on those standards.

The Common Core State Standards movement was initiated by the business community and supported by the Business Roundtable and the National Governors Association. These organizations understand that the ability to remain competitive in today's global, knowledge-based economy depends upon graduates proficient in 21st-century skills that rely on information technology and critical thinking to innovate and solve problems. National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (highest education officer in each state) convened a national group of specialists to develop standards for English literacy and mathematics for grades K-12. This work was under control of the states, not the federal government.

Perhaps a more compelling argument for some national standards is the equity imperative that argues that all children deserve an equal opportunity for obtaining a quality education. The federal law No Child Left Behind mandated that all states set high standards for reading and mathematics and all students would be proficient in those areas by 2014. As the target deadline edged closer, interim assessments indicated that goal would not be achieved under current measures. Consequently, most states lowered the scores needed to reach proficiency. This became evident when comparisons of achievement levels of student performance on state assessments and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed significant disparities between NAEP and state scores as well as great disparities from state to state. This has prompted calls for more uniformity and consistency in what all students across the nation should know and be able to do at each grade level. Now the same academic expectations are set for all students across the nation, and far greater attention is being directed to narrowing the achievement gap between groups of students and between states.

Standards describe what students should know and be able to do with content at each grade level. Standards are not curriculum and do not dictate what content should be taught. Standards indicate the skills, competencies, and fluencies students should be able to apply to the content of instruction. The emphasis of the new standards is three-fold: focus (few key topics pursued in greater depth), coherence (sequence of topics following a logical progression with an increasing degree of complexity), and rigor (challenging content and application of knowledge and skills). Since the state standards can be applied to any curriculum, there is no danger of compromising the Catholic identity or independence of the Catholic school. Catholic schools can continue to implement their own curriculum. The key for successful adoption of the standards is the manner in which the content is delivered and in what expectations are set for learning activities and outcome expectations students will experience.

The goal of the standards movement is to prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and work by emphasizing cognitive tasks that demand application of thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, communication to rigorous content. The standards

require six shifts in English language arts and literacy:

1. Balancing information and literacy texts: greater use of non-fiction.
2. Building knowledge in the disciplines: making cross-curricular links, especially with social studies and science.
3. Staircase of complexity: increasing the complexity of language and ideas in chosen texts.
4. Text-based answers: emphasis on providing evidence of comprehension of the text rather than personal experience.
5. Writing from sources: emphasis on use of evidence to inform an argument rather than personal narratives.
6. Academic vocabulary: build the discipline-specific vocabulary needed to access grade-level complex texts.

The ELA standards devote as much attention to what students read—in terms of complexity, quality, and range—as they do on how students read and communicate ideas. As students progress through the grades, they must develop comprehension skills and the ability to apply them to increasingly complex texts. Standards require a rich reading of literature (fiction and non-fiction, essays, biographies, drama, poetry, stories, primary sources) as well as extensive reading in science, history/social studies, and other disciplines. The increased emphasis on non-fiction requires a 50/50 balance of fiction and non-fiction in grades K-2, advancing to a 40/60 ratio in grades 3-5 and a 30/70 focus for grades 6-12. Students are required to learn certain critical content, including classic myths and stories from around the world, America's founding documents, and foundational American literature. Students must learn to apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate texts and use appropriate vocabulary to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

The standards also require six shifts in mathematics:

1. Focus: narrow and deepen the scope of the concepts.
2. Coherence: build new understanding onto foundations built in prior grades.
3. Fluency: develop speed and accuracy with calculations.
4. Deep understanding: demonstrate understanding and application of concepts before learning new ones.
5. Applications: use math and choose the appropriate applications to address problems.
6. Dual intensity: develop balance of understanding and practice.

The math standards focus on developing core conceptual understandings and procedures starting in the early grades where students gain a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals. In the middle grades, instruction builds upon that foundation and introduces concepts in geometry, algebra, probability, and statistics. In high school, students practice applying mathematical thinking to real-world issues and learn mathematical modeling. Successful implementation of the standards is largely dependent upon the instructional practices utilized. The quality of instruction and the resources used must be aligned to the standard, and the training of teachers and administrators must be focused on the expected outcomes for students.

High-quality instructional resources, lesson plans, and textbooks must be developed; and the new common assessments aligned to these standards, currently in development, must be used for improving instruction. There are some concerns that must be addressed as implementation

occurs. A plethora of resources can be found, both free and for a fee, on the Web and through entrepreneurs offering services. Careful examination of the quality of such resources is a must.

Locating good texts and other supplemental materials that support the mission and curriculum is paramount; curriculum should not be dictated by available resources. Start by relating the standards to basal readers and mathematics texts, then seek additional resources.

Finding time and funds for ongoing, applied professional development of teachers must also be addressed. Creating unit and lesson plans to implement the standards is complex and requires articulation across the grades. There is a great need for teachers to work in learning communities to ensure that the shifts required do occur with consistency and intensity throughout the school. Teachers need to become familiar with all the standards, not just those specific to the grade that they teach. The ELA reading requirements for increased non-fiction texts must be shared by math, history, science, and social studies teachers; and integrated reading across the curriculum must be established in collaborative and structured ways if the balanced education envisioned by the standards is to be accomplished. Additionally, new formative and summative assessments must be developed, and reporting mechanisms to parents should be clear and comprehensive.

While the instructional components apply to public and private schools alike, there is a significant concern for Catholic schools that are implementing the standards. Most of the resource materials that are available do not address the issue of integration of elements of Catholic identity into the curriculum. A hallmark of Catholic education is the infusion of Catholic dogma and tradition, gospel values, morality, and the themes of Catholic social teaching (life and dignity of the human person, care for God's creation, dignity of work and rights of workers, option for the poor and vulnerable, individual rights and responsibilities, and the call to family and community participation) into the curriculum through the teaching and learning process.

To assist Catholic dioceses and schools in the process of implementation of the Common Core standards within the culture and context of a Catholic-school curriculum, the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative (CCCII) has been developed as a collaborative initiative involving several Catholic universities, corporations and sponsors invested in Catholic education, and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). The project is engaged in an ongoing effort to produce resources that will enable teachers to infuse Catholic identity into the selection of curriculum content and the application of the standards into instructional activities. The combined efforts of classroom practitioners, curriculum specialists, and academics have produced practical and user-friendly unit plans that can be adapted to classroom use by other Catholic-school educators. A CCCII website has been created with extensive resources produced by the project. Catholicschoolstandards.org/common-core is the website.

Ultimately, standards, curriculum, and teaching/learning activities must be designed to enable Catholic-school students to become academically and morally equipped to enter college and the workforce as literate, competent and socially responsible adults. The Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative is one means to assist educators in implementing that process.

DIOCESE OF DENVER

Diocese of Denver

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Is the Archdiocese of Denver Catholic Schools adopting the Common Core State Standards?

A. No

Q. Will this have a negative impact on AoDCS students?

A. No. AoDCS publishes curriculum guidelines in ten subject areas that provide a framework for what students will know and be able to do. It is revised and updated on a regular schedule. This will not change. AoDCS will continue to provide rigorous academics as part of formation of the whole child, preparing students for futures we cannot predict.

Q. Will AoDCS students take the test for the Common Core State Standards (In Colorado, the PARCC)?

A. No. Since our curriculum does not follow the CCSS, AoDCS students will not participate in the assessment.

Q. How else might the CCSS affect AoDCS students?

A. The Common Core will impact textbook publishers and college readiness tests like the SAT and the ACT. Teacher preparation programs at the University level will also be impacted by the implementation of the CCSS. The Archdiocese of Denver Office of Catholic Schools (OCS) will continue to train teacher mentors to assist new teachers with understanding the philosophies and methods that guide instruction in our Catholic schools. OCS will continue to guide new Principals in implementation of curriculum guidelines imbued with a Catholic world view, and to provide ongoing formation for teachers in this area.

Q. Will AoDCS use “Common Core” Textbooks?

A. AoDCS students will use some of those textbooks. We have examined the Common Core and, as we have traditionally done, we have taken what is best from the Common Core and incorporated it into our curriculum guidelines with input from Catholic school teachers, principals, and the Office of Catholic Schools.

Textbooks are a support for professional teachers, not a curriculum in themselves. Teachers and Principals will ensure that the formation of students includes faith formation as well as rigorous academics regardless of the textbooks that are used.

Q. How will parents know that AoDCS students are doing as well as their peers on College readiness exams?

A. The OCS and high school administrators monitor the yearly results of AoDCS students on SAT, ACT, and AP subject tests. These assessment results will continue to inform teachers and administrators about areas for continuous improvement.

AoDCS Curriculum Evaluation or Questions

AoDCS curriculum guidelines are posted on our website (www.archden.org). Parents and other stakeholders who have specific questions about one or more of the student objectives posted there are welcome to contact OCS about their concerns or questions at schoolinfo@archden.org.

Additional background information and explanation about this issue is included in the White Paper that follows.

Background

Leaders of the Catholic Church have affirmed through numerous documents the critical importance and value of Catholic school education. Regulations at the highest level (Canon Law) indicate that Catholic schools must be as effective as local public schools in transmitting scholastic content while at the same time transmitting the faith. The United States Catholic bishops have supported Catholic schools as the most effective way of transmitting the faith. Archdiocese of Denver Catholic Schools (AoDCS) forms children in the faith and promises them complete personal development and unsurpassed academic success. In order to accomplish this, AoDCS provides curriculum guidelines in 10 subjects to define what teachers are to teach students at each grade level and in each subject. There must be quality assessments aligned with these curriculum objectives to ensure that students know and can do what the guidelines require. Schools must have excellent teachers in place to provide instruction for students using these guidelines and assessments. Catholic identity must permeate the curriculum guidelines, the instruction, and assessments. Curriculum guidelines provide a template for teachers, teachers provide instruction, and assessments demonstrate that learners have achieved unsurpassed academic success. A process of continuous improvement ensures that curriculum guidelines are regularly examined and updated or revised where needed, that teachers use assessment results to improve teaching, that students are provided with learning opportunities at levels that challenge and support each one's academic achievement, and that leadership provides vision, direction, and supervision.

What are the Common Core State Standards?

Ultimately, it is the state government that makes and enforces education policy and provides the funding for public schools through taxation. Recently it has become clear that there is uneven provision in states for academic guidelines and rigor. The federal government has tried to impact public school policy by leveraging the monies that come to schools through federal programs, most notably through the No Child Left Behind Act (the 2002 edition of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act passed in 1965 and the Race to the Top funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009). These monies supplement local tax dollars for schools serving families living at poverty level, or are otherwise under resourced. The federal government asked states to design tests for students to ensure that each child would be performing at or above grade level. If students were not performing at that level, then the school would be singled out for improvement measures to ensure that students did, indeed, meet the achievement levels. Non-compliance with these directives would result in schools losing federal funding.

The National Association of Governors, the National Business Roundtable, and The Council of Chief State School Officers collaborated to design a set of curriculum standards that could help all students reach the same base-line goals. This collaboration resulted in the publication of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) issued in April of 2010. Forty-eight states have adopted the CCSS as their state standards; Colorado has adapted these standards and provide the Colorado Academic Standards which replace the Colorado Model Content Curriculum Guidelines. These standards are not a prescriptive pattern for what teachers must teach, but a list of what students need to know and be able to do at the end of each grade. Local districts and

schools must design curricula to deliver the learning that the standards denote. AoDCS never adopted the Colorado Model Content Curriculum Guidelines and will not use the Colorado Academic Standards, but instead designs its own curriculum guidelines. AoDCS has used the recommendation of national subject area organizations, McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning), the work of sister arch/dioceses, and input from teacher practitioners in our schools to compile the AoDCS Curriculum Guidelines. These are many of the same sources used by the designers of government school curriculum guidelines. In many cases, AoDCS guidelines already use some of the same objectives and language used in the CCSS. CCSS is becoming pervasive and Catholic school students will be impacted by this movement regardless of what we do. Textbook publishers advertise compliance with CCSS. AoDCS schools may use those textbooks. Assessments are devised for CCSS, and politicians argue about the validity of CCSS. AoDCS students will take such tests as SAT and ACT that will also be taken by students from public schools.

Catholic School Response to the Common Core State Standards

Catholic school leaders understand the reality of the Catholic school in the midst of change. “New requirements have given force to the demand for new contents, new capabilities and new educational models besides those followed traditionally. Thus education and schooling become particularly difficult today.

Such an outlook calls for courageous renewal on the part of the Catholic school. The precious heritage of the experience gained over the centuries reveals its vitality precisely in the *capacity for prudent innovation* (emphasis added). And so, now as in the past, the Catholic school must be able to speak for itself effectively and convincingly. It is not merely a question of adaptation, but of missionary thrust, the fundamental duty to evangelize, to go towards men and women wherever they are, so that they may receive the gift of salvation” (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 1997).

One of the 18 Quality Indicators articulated and measured by stakeholders in the AoDCS brand research is “having excellent core curriculum based on national standards.” AoDCS is using the CCSS as one of many resources in reviewing and revising curriculum guidelines. A comparison of the current AoDCS Language Arts Curriculum Guideline and the CCSS revealed that there is already a great deal of commonality between the two documents. AoDCS has been working with rigorous academic guidelines for students for many years. In the latest revision, AoDCS has retained what was already excellent in previous guidelines, has added items from the CCSS and other sources that strengthened the guidelines. In some cases, language was adopted from the CCSS for AoDCS curriculum objectives because it clarified and sharpened the understanding of the objective and the expectation for the students and teachers. This is part of prudent innovation.

Assessment of Rigorous Curriculum

Part of the impetus for devising the Common Core is the mediocre test results of students in the United States when compared to test results of students in other industrialized countries on international tests such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). Designers of the CCSS see one of its reasons for being and positive attributes to be nationwide clarity and consistency in curriculum

objectives. The states whose teachers and superintendents helped to write the Common Core and who have adopted it either wholly or in part, also see a need for an assessment vehicle. Two groups of state education departments are creating a comprehensive test based on the Common Core: the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) of which Colorado is a member. Educators understand that the objectives in the CCSS must be assessed to assure that students know and can do what the curriculum objectives outline. Since AoDCS is not using the CCSS, or the Colorado Academic Standards, we will not use the SBAC test or the PARCC test, either.

How do Catholic school parents, donors, parishioners, pastors, etc. – that is, our stakeholders – know that our schools live up to the promise of unsurpassed academic expectations? AoDCS belongs to two organizations that provide structures to assist leadership in assessing the Catholic identity and academic effectiveness of schools: AdvancED and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). AdvancED is an international accrediting organization that provides benchmarks for effective schools, and the parent organization for the North Central Association (NCA). AoDCS is accredited as a District by AdvancED, and through the district, each school is individually accredited. After schools and districts have done a self-study, outside evaluators from AdvancED examine 5 Standards: 1) Purpose and Direction, 2) Governance and Leadership, 3) Teaching and Assessing for Learning, 4) Resources and Support Systems, and 5) Using Results for Continuous Improvement. As part of Standard 3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning, schools/district identify what instruments are used to ensure that students are showing growth in achievement related to their adopted curriculum guidelines. AoDCS uses nationally normed tests such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), SAT, and ACT. Schools in the system use other available criterion referenced tests and teacher designed tests. Outside evaluators affirm that through these nationally respected assessments our students demonstrate continuous growth in academic achievement.

NCEA has written *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*. These benchmarks have 4 Domains: 1) Mission and Catholic Identity, 2) Governance and Leadership, 3) Academic Excellence, and 4) Operational Vitality. These are blended with and used by AdvancED in the accreditation process. Domain 3: Academic Excellence of the benchmarks states “an excellent Catholic School has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with the relevant standards, 21st century skills, and Gospel values, implemented through effective instruction.” Through internal self-study and external quality assurance reviews, AoDCS and individual schools assure that they are meeting this standard and identify ways to improve.

In 2005, the United States Catholic Bishops noted that “young people of the third millennium must be a source of energy and leadership in our Church and our nation. Therefore, we must provide young people with an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program of education and faith formation designed to strengthen their union with Christ and his Church” (*Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*, 2005).

Conclusion

Thus, AoDCS students, teachers, and schools are held to a high standard of continuous improvement by a variety of assessment tools, agencies and internal inspection. Catholic schools

are not governed by state agencies and are not assessed by them so AoDCS will not be using the CCSS or any government designed assessments. However, our students do enter the marketplace where they will compete with their peers from government schools, and where they will become contributing citizens of the state and the nation. We must ensure that the education provided by AoDCS prepares our students to be personally successful, demonstrate complete personal development and experience unsurpassed academic achievement for futures we can't predict.
September 12, 2013

DIOCESE OF SIOUX FALLS

Response to Common Core

The Catholic schools of the Diocese of Sioux Falls have a longstanding and well-deserved reputation for traditional, academic rigor. More importantly, our schools are committed to providing a Catholic education to those we serve by forming and awakening faith within our students. Our schools will continue to be places of learning where our primary mission is to ensure our children have an authentic encounter with Jesus Christ.

So how are Catholic schools defined in light of educational reforms and implementation of Common Core State Standards?

We enjoy academic freedom as nonpublic schools, where we are in control of the learning process within our schools. We are at liberty to use the Common Core as we see fit. We will determine what to adapt and only utilize that which best fits our unique mission. Our focus is to be vigilant as we adhere to the Truth that the Catholic Church teaches and to insure that the faith and education of our children is not compromised.

What is the involvement of our Catholic schools with Common Core?

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sioux Falls have been encouraged to be versed in SD Department of Education implementation of Common Core Standards and in preparation of the change from Dakota STEP (South Dakota State Test of Educational Progress) to SMARTER Balanced Assessment in 2015. Our schools welcome the research and attention to clear, measurable goals and outcomes for what our students should know and understand. It is in this educational environment that Catholic school educators have the responsibility to prepare Catholic school students for the next level of their education.

We are mindful that in 10 of our 23 diocesan schools, our students do not have the opportunity to attend a Catholic junior high or high school and must be prepared to transition into public school. Our Catholic school educators have been directed to maintain the integrity of our educational mission and work to meet the needs of our students.

Will our Catholic schools use the Common Core Standards?

The Catholic schools will work within the framework of the Common Core State Standards, but the standards our schools will adopt will be reflective of our Catholic heritage and emphasize our values and traditions. To this end our schools have been directed to approach this shift in teaching and learning as the opportunity to intentionally infuse the instructional content with Catholic Identity rather than having Catholic Identity as an add-on.

Are there *Catholic* common core standards?

Yes, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sioux Falls are expected to be Catholic at the core, not common at the core. Our schools are actively at work reviewing the standards and aligning them with our Catholic worldview. We fully intend to use this opportunity of educational reform to renew our commitment to the traditional purposes of schooling – teaching children, perpetuating our cultural heritage, producing intelligent and participatory citizens, and encouraging innovation and creativity. As Catholic schools we will embrace with renewed vigor our work of encouraging the development of a moral conscience, creating a community of faith based on Gospel values and producing intelligent, participatory members of the future Catholic Church. Our schools are to be different by design.

Of interest in support of Catholic schools is the [Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative \(CCCII\)](#). This is a national group involving educators who are invested in supporting Catholic education in our nation. This is a resource our schools can use in making local decisions.

Why have Common Core Standards?

Instructional standards are not new to our work as educators. All teachers, in both public and private schools are asked to teach students according to defined standards. These standards are designed to show what students are supposed to know and be able to do by the time they leave a particular grade.

Past practice has presented teachers with a long list of instructional standards that were supposed to be covered by the end of the school year. Over time this developed into offering instruction that is “a mile wide and an inch deep”. Colleges and employers complained and research data showed that students are emerging from U.S. schools lacking in key knowledge and skills. These findings led to a coalition between the Council of Chief State School Officer and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the establishment of a shared set of clear educational standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. In 2010, the South Dakota Board of Education moved to join the majority of states and adopt the Common Core Standards.

The Common Core standards approach fundamentally shifts the teaching and learning process. They focus intensely on a smaller number of standards that have been directly linked to success in college and career. The emphasis is on mastery in targeted areas, on creativity, critical thinking and real-world application. With an in-depth study of the actual standards, you may discover that much of this approach looks familiar to us. The truth is that this “sweeping change” looks a lot like the traditional approach found in most Catholic schools.

What are the Standards?

To date there are only two subject areas. But why rely on someone else's interpretation, read the standards for yourself. [The Common Core State Standards](#) are available on the South Dakota Department of Education web site: [English Language Arts](#) and [Mathematics](#).

Will our Catholic students be required to read inappropriate material?

No, the educators in our local schools will decide what materials are suitable for our students to read. The appendices of the Common Core State Standard documents offer lists of reading material for each grade level. You will discover many tried and true favorites included on those lists, however, there is no requirement forcing us to use any of those selections. We are free to substitute whatever grade appropriate written material we would like to use, including the Bible, writings by the Saints and Church leaders and wonderful morality, values-based stories like those that were printed in Catholic textbooks in the past.

Does Common Core require the use of preselected content?

No, in fact, the actual Common Core document states on page 6:

- The Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach
- While the Standards focus on what is most essential, they do not describe all that can or should be taught. A great deal is left to the discretion of teachers and curriculum developers. The aim of the Standards is to articulate the fundamentals, not to set out an exhaustive list or a set of restrictions that limits what can be taught beyond what is specified herein.

Why are there alarming reports of required content that is contrary to Catholic teaching?

All that bears the Common Core label is not Common Core. Everywhere we turn we see special interest groups propagating teaching objectives and recommended reading that seems very official and connected to Common Core. The statement about being aligned to Common Core is being espoused by the salesman selling globes and maps, special interest organizations and any number of activist groups pushing their own agenda. In fact, the very freedom built into the structure of the standards that enables individual schools and educators to select content which they find meaningful, can either build up or tear down. In schools with the expressed purpose of building up our children in the faith and hope of the Magisterium, Catholic parents can confidently partner with the school in educating their child. However, in schools adrift in modern culture, there is great potential for Catholic values to be torn down, putting our children at risk.

What are Catholic educational leaders saying about Common Core?

The Common Core Standards in themselves are not a curriculum. They do not dictate our curriculum or the sequence of the topics we teach. They do not dictate instructional methodologies or the materials we use. The National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) states:

The Common Core State Standards are not a curriculum. A curriculum includes what is taught, when it is taught, how it is taught and what materials to use. None of these items are included in the Common Core State Standards. For Catholic schools, all of these elements will continue to be determined by diocesan superintendents, principals and teachers working to meet the needs of their students.

To read the complete one-page position statement go to: http://www.ncea.org/sites/default/files/documents/ncea_commoncorestatestandards_053113.pdf

The Office of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Sioux Falls supports the work of our local Catholic schools. We encourage our constituents to trust that we will remain true to the mission of Catholic education. It has long been the tradition and commitment of Catholic schools to give the children that God has entrusted to our care, both formation in our Catholic faith and the tools of college and career readiness.

DIOCESE OF KNOXVILLE

August 5, 2013

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian:

Welcome back to the 2013-2014 school year! With the 25th anniversary of the Diocese of Knoxville, our Eucharistic Congress, and the renewed spirit of our youth who followed this year's World Youth Day with Pope Francis, this looks to be an exciting year in Catholic schools!

This year also marks the beginning of our formal integration of the Common Core state standards (CCSS) into the curriculum of the Diocese of Knoxville. I am using that phrasing about the Common Core very intentionally. We are integrating the CCSS into the larger offering of our curriculum, which includes much more than instruction in English Language Arts/Literacy and Math. Catholic schools have always represented more than an academic curriculum.

As a diocese, we want to articulate clearly how we are approaching the Common Core. As you may be aware, the CCSS have become a political issue for many media outlets. Many of these issues relate to the implementation of the Common Core in public schools; therefore, they do not apply to our Catholic schools. Nevertheless, as good citizens and as stewards of our Catholic schools, it is important that we keep informed on any potential impact on our schools.

The primary issues are these:

Loss of local control - Decisions regarding education are outlined by our government as an area of state, not federal, control. Some people see the institution of standards nationwide as a loss of that control. States have had a choice in adopting the standards; however, this point has become muddled since many States agreed to adopt the standards in order to apply for federal funding. Our Catholic schools are not impacted by this in any way. Our control is local; all decisions made in our diocese are our own. We have no state or federal obligations to follow the standards. We also do not receive federal funding that might mandate that we do so.

Testing and Data Collection - There are concerns among public schools that the standards have been implemented before the tests to measure proficiency have been fully developed and vetted. The format of the testing, including constructed-response and computer based assessments, will require some amount of human

scoring, which will make the tests very expensive and brings into question their objectivity. In the diocese we will continue to use the new Iowa Assessment, which provides both the norm-referenced data to which we are accustomed and information about where students fail in terms of Common Core proficiency. Our test has been evaluated and normed, and it remains an objective assessment.

The second part of the testing issue in the public schools is the nature of the data that is being collected on the individual students through testing, and whether or not this data will be provided to the federal government. Some reports indicate that, in addition to general test data, racial, economic, and other demographic information, including health issues that may impact learning, will be able to be shared outside of the school due to recent amendments to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the current application of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) as they relate to educational records. Schools are going to be required to report this information to a national, non-governmental organization that will maintain the data until students reach the age of 20. We suspect this issue may become a legal one and recognize this will be a serious area of concern. We are not impacted by this issue because we will not be participating in the mandatory state assessments of Common Core proficiency. We cannot be required to participate because we do not accept federal funding that may have these strings attached.

Source of Funding and Political Distrust - Other concerns relate to the source of funding for the development of the CCSS, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which supports among its many causes some that are in contradiction to our beliefs as Catholics. There is also a general sense of mistrust of the current administration, especially following the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate and other policies that have infringed upon the rights of individuals and groups like the Catholic Church. This is, perhaps, the most difficult issue for us.

In the end we have decided to follow the example of more than 100 dioceses in the United States and integrate the academic standards into our curriculum without "buying into" these other aspects related to how the Common Core is being implemented in the public schools. We recognize that these standards represent expectations of what students should be able to do at the end of each grade level, and college testing like the ACT and SAT is being revised to take these standards into account. We risk failing our children if we do not adequately prepare them for the next level. We cannot operate in complete isolation from the rest of the national education establishment.

It is our intention to fully integrate these standards into what we are teaching in the classroom. However, unlike the public schools, we are not limited by them. The Common Core identifies end of the year outcomes (what students need to know and be able to do), but they do not dictate how these outcomes should be taught, what materials are to be used, or limit the creativity of our classroom teachers. Standards actually emphasize creativity, critical thinking, writing, and real-world applications, which we philosophically support.

With the creation of the position of Diocesan Director of Curriculum and Instruction (Mrs. Sedonna Prater), it is our goal to develop our own graded course of study, based on the state of Tennessee's standards, which includes the Common Core plus some local standards, and then scale them up to represent more rigorous instruction, where appropriate, and infuse them with our Catholic identity. All teachers, in the implementation of the CCSS, will have to look at their individual students and decide where their entry point is in the standards, teach additional background skills that the students may lack, and provide support for students who struggle academically. All of this will be necessary for students to achieve the end-of-year outcomes of the Common Core. This approach will also give us the opportunity to provide additional professional development on recommended CCSS instructional strategies and how to adapt standards to create curriculum units based on our own fundamental beliefs and priorities.

The reading/literature resources we are using include a mixture of fiction, informational articles, poetry, drama, and other genres. There has been a recent focus on training reading teachers to work with nonfiction resources that has led some individuals and national media personalities to conclude that there is a move away from literature in our schools, which is not the case. We will maintain a balance between fiction and nonfiction. CCSS emphasize teaching literacy through content areas such as science and social studies, a practice our Catholic schools have always embraced.

In the end we are asking you to trust us to act for the good of your child(ren) as we have for the last 25 years in this diocese and longer still as part of the Diocese of Nashville. The diocese has always relied on the experience of our teachers and the oversight of our principals to ensure that the education we provide prepares students for the next level and for life based on our faith. This is the hallmark of a Catholic school.

Please know my gratitude to each of you as you make daily sacrifices to provide the gift of a Catholic education for your child(ren). I ask that you please pray for all who serve in our Catholic schools, and be assured of our prayers for you who are the primary educator of your child(ren).

Sister Mary Marta Abbott, RSM., Ed.S. Superintendent of Catholic Schools

DIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY-ST. JOSEPH

www.stpeterskc.org/newsletters/Academics/2013-2014/Common%20Core%20Statement.pdf

“The Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph will always use curriculum that forms our students in the Catholic faith and prepares them for their place in the world. The diocese will continue to review our curriculum on a regular basis, adopting what is important and relevant to our Catholic schools’ mission. Aspects of common core that support this mission will be adopted. Aspects of common core that don’t support this mission will not be adopted.” Dr. Dan Peters, Superintendent

Common Core Statement

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has had a strong influence over the direction of American education for the past several years. Many public districts in over 40 states and some Catholic schools have adopted these standards, including Missouri, and these districts/dioceses are making plans to appropriately adjust their curriculum and instruction to support the new standards. Over the past several months parents and parishioners have shared with me their concerns and questions regarding Common Core State Standards. Concerns have been expressed that CCSS will have a negative impact on their children’s faith formation and/or education within our diocesan Catholic schools. Some have questions about what the CCSS is and what its impact on Catholic education will be. It became clear that the understanding associated with CCSS needed clarification. In order to address those concerns and questions, I first need to explain the diocesan curricular cycle and show how common core might have impact on our current curriculum.

Curricular Cycle

For the purpose of this article, “curriculum” is the set of courses and their content offered at a school or district/diocese, including instructional practices. “Standards” are a list of skills or knowledge we want our students to master for a particular course or subject. Over the past few decades, the diocesan standards for many of the courses and grade level subjects have followed

the Missouri state standards, especially after *No Child Left Behind* was established by the federal government. Diocesan educators felt it was necessary to adopt these standards to assure students within our schools remained competitive with public school students. Of course, the diocese expected much more of their students than these minimal standards and has always included aspects in its curriculum that were specifically Catholic, such as standards for religion and theology classes and integration of Catholicity across all curriculum.

As mandated by the most recent diocesan strategic plan, we are presently in a process to standardize the curriculum within our schools. Standardizing the curriculum will put the diocesan schools in a better position to more efficiently and effectively provide professional development and assess the progress of our students. As we standardize the diocesan curriculum, it will be reviewed and modified to assure our students receive an education to form them as Catholics and to prepare them to effectively compete at colleges/universities and within their chosen careers. Committees of teachers, administrators, and pastors for each subject and grade level will decide which parts of our present curriculum we want to maintain and which parts of other curriculum we might want to adopt. For instance, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' Principles & Standards for School Mathematics will probably be reviewed by math curriculum committees when reviewing and updating the diocesan math curriculum. Aspects of those standards might be included in the diocesan curriculum if they would improve the education we provide our students. As part of that process, the CCSS will be reviewed and parts of the CCSS may be included, if those standards would advance the academic excellence of the diocesan curriculum and not conflict with the Catholic formation of the students

Before we discuss common core, it is important to understand the rest of the diocesan curricular cycle. Once the diocesan curriculum is established, several steps need to occur to assure our students are getting the best Catholic education. First of all, it is important that parents, teachers, pastors, and administrators clearly understand the curriculum we provide our students. Secondly, teachers and administrators will require professional development (training) on the best methods to execute the curriculum and standards in the classrooms. The professional development will include training on research-based instructional practices for each subject area and grade level. Thirdly, an assessment plan that is aligned to the standards must be established. The results of the assessments will be used to make informed decisions about how to update the curriculum, what areas we need to improve the instruction we provide students, and what professional development teachers need. Since the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act was established in 2002, educators have discovered educational standards can be established, effectively taught, and assessed. Prior to NCLB, curriculum standards were established in many public school districts and diocesan schools, but few measured the effectiveness of the curriculum with an assessment that was aligned to the standards. NCLB required public schools to adopt an assessment that measured how effectively the schools were teaching their state standards. Prior to that requirement, the standardized assessments used by most schools were not necessarily aligned with the standards --- the schools taught one thing and the standardized assessment measured something slightly different. In addition, most NCLB standards identified "lower order" thinking skills such as rote memory or simple knowledge retrieval. Though NCLB certainly had its problems, its one redeeming quality was showing educators they could effectively and efficiently teach students a given set of standards by using brain-based instructional practices, data from aligned assessments, and research-based professional development to support teachers. One of

the downsides to NCLB is that it was based on lower-order thinking skills. Some wondered what would happen if we use the effective educational practices learned during NCLB to teach “higher-order” thinking skills such as creation, analysis, evaluation, and application of knowledge to solve authentic problems? It was thought that we could establish curriculum standards that required “higher-order” thinking, use instructional practices designed to teach “higher-order” thinking skills, and through aligned assessment determine the effectiveness of the instruction. That is in part what the CCSS tries to do --- set “higher-order” thinking standards and provide an assessment to measure how effectively the standards are being taught. In addition, motivation to adopt CCSS came from those who wanted the American students to compete more effectively with students from other countries. American students’ performance on global assessments relative to students from other countries has been slipping for the past several decades. It was thought that a national curriculum similar to curriculum from countries where students perform better would raise the educational bar for all American students and thus improve their performance on global assessments.

History of Common Core

In order to raise graduation requirements, improve assessment results, and raise academic standards, a bi-partisan organization was convened in 1996 --- the American Diploma Project (ADP). A 2004 report entitled, “Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts,” discovered that employers and colleges wanted more from high school graduates than had been expected in the past. The report shows that many high school graduates are not provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in today’s world. "While students and their parents may still believe that the diploma reflects adequate preparation for the intellectual demands of adult life, in reality, it falls far short of this common-sense goal" (page 1, <http://www.corestandards.org>). The report indicates that the solution was a common set of rigorous standards. In 2009, the National Governor’s Association had curriculum standards written in the areas of literacy and mathematics instruction. "The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers" (<http://www.corestandards.org>). Standards were released for mathematics and English Language Arts on June 2, 2010. Science and social studies are to follow. Over 45 of the states have adopted common core standards, including Missouri. Common core assessments are being developed by Smarter Balanced and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Missouri plans to use Smarter Balanced assessment.

Conclusion

The Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph will always use curriculum that forms our students in the Catholic faith and prepares them for their place in the world. The diocese will continue to review our curriculum on a regular basis, adopting what is important and relevant to our Catholic schools’ mission. Aspects of common core that support this mission will be adopted. Aspects of common core that don’t support this mission will not be adopted. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you have. I would also encourage you to read an article by Sr. Dale McDonald, PBVM, PhD, the Director of Public Policy and Educational Research for the National Catholic Educational Association in Arlington, VA, entitled *Embracing and Enhancing the Common Core in Catholic Schools* http://www.catholicteacher.com/archive/articles_view.php?article_id=4052

This article provides more specific information about the CCSS. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the Catholic School Office in The Catholic Center.

Following are some answers to concerns parents have brought to me about Common Core

Concern: This new national curriculum is going to force us to teach unchristian values and indoctrinate our children with socialist and/or left wing rhetoric.

This complaint begins with a faulty premise, namely, national standards lead to a national curriculum. The common core standards are just that - standards. They give us a guide to where our kids should be by the end of each grade level. It does not tell us how to teach it or what to teach. In fact, it is actually less prescriptive than many of the current state standards. We have more latitude to teach what we want than we did before. You can find suggested texts on the list, like alternate lifestyles or causes of global warming, that you might be opposed to, but remember this is a suggested list, not a required reading list. You can also find Common Core resource websites (often cited is Engage Learning) that are clearly left leaning. But again there is no requirement that we use those websites or that we would use those resource materials. Our schools will continue to have independence in regards to what we teach.

Concern: But with the required testing, decreasing number of textbook companies and increasing government influence this is just the first step and eventually there will be a national curriculum. First, many education officials have had a major impact on the creation of the new SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) test. Catholic educators have representatives on all major subcommittees and are influencing the test in significant ways. Second, textbooks have never been written for Missouri. All major textbooks are written for New York, Texas, or California, and our teachers know they cannot blindly follow the textbook. This will still be the case with common core. Our teachers will never just blindly teach a lesson because they found it in a book or on a website; they will teach what is relevant and Christian based. Finally, if the worst case scenario happens and our accreditation processes require us to adopt a national curriculum that conflicts with our Catholic values then we would always have the choice to withdraw from those organizations. We are not required to comply with Missouri state accreditation.

Concern: There was no state input into the passage of the common core. It was pushed through by “two DC based official-sounding trade organizations, the NGA and the CCSSO” but the timeline of Race to the Top Grant applications forced state legislatures to adopt it without having time to really study it.

First, the two trade organizations are the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Offices. So the governors reviewed it and the Secretary of Education from each state reviewed it multiple times. There was plenty of research done before this decision was made. Second, while Race to the Top money may have influenced some states, it did not influence Missouri.

Concern: If we do not like what is being taught, neither you nor any official in the state will have any power to change it or have anyone to call?

Again this goes back to standards versus curriculum. The standards just tell us that fractions should now be taught in 5th grade rather than 4th grade and students should be able to critically

evaluate an article for accuracy or bias. If parents have issues with how fractions are being taught or what articles students are being asked to critically evaluate they will still be able to talk to the teacher and principal about this implementation of the standard. This concern is only valid if the standards turn into a curriculum. If somehow the government tries to force a national curriculum on our schools then we would have to critically evaluate it for compliance with our values, but that is not close to happening yet.

Concern: The common core standards are no good. Dr. Stotsky considers the English Standards “empty skill sets” and they are cutting out literature and replacing it with reading manuals. First, it is inconsistent to argue that the ELA standards are “empty skill sets that are not fully developed enough to prepare kids for college” and, at the same time, to say that this is really a national curriculum where they are telling us exactly what to teach. It cannot be both. Second, while Dr. Stotsky says the skills are not stringent enough, many professionals believe they represent a significant improvement in rigor. The teachers and administrators in the Diocese have been working with common core for two years and concur with the majority that it is a step up in the amount of research, analysis, grammar, writing and speaking from the current Missouri standards. Second, critics say English teachers are required to teach 50 percent informational text and that this drop in literature is a shame and is a detriment to the free thinking ability of our students. This is inaccurate. The common core standards do state that 50 percent of reading analysis and comprehension should come from informational text but you do not get there by reducing the amount of literature. A teacher gets to 50 percent by increasing the amount of Social Studies primary sources and scientific journals that are read, not by decreasing the amount of Literature. Nowhere in the common core does it encourage, or require, a decrease in the amount of literature taught.

Concern: Common Core is going to be very expensive, particularly because it requires computerized testing.

It is true the common core will probably require teacher training and new textbooks. But teachers are always utilizing professional development and schools are always using a textbook adoption rotation so neither of these costs is above and beyond the norm. Second, most of the figures you see about the expense of common core has to do with the increased technology needed to give computerized assessments.

Concern: Common Core requires a massive student data base that will collect over 400 data points to track everything about children and their families.

Common core is not requiring this collection data because it is illegal for them to do so. They are requesting that the states collect this information and provide it to them. The schools try in every way to safeguard the privacy of our students and their families.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

There has been a lot of conversation lately about the Common Core, a prevalent educational movement in the United States. The Common Core clearly seems to have caught the attention of many people in southwest Ohio; the topic comes up frequently when I speak to parents and

Catholic school supporters, and I have received a number of questions about how the Common Core will impact teaching within the 114 [Catholic schools](#) of the Archdiocese.

As a Catholic school parent, and as an educator, I can understand the interest in the Common Core. Our schools have made a commitment to provide the best, most rigorous, most authentically Catholic education to the students we serve. How does the Common Core movement support this mission? How can we harness the Common Core to benefit the learning in our schools?

All teachers, within both public and private schools, are asked to teach students according to defined standards. These standards illustrate what students are supposed to know and be able to do by the time they leave a particular grade. Historically, teachers have been presented with a laundry list of instructional standards that they must sprint to cover by the end of the year. By offering instruction that is “a mile wide and an inch deep”, teachers have complained (and data has borne out) that students are emerging from schools lacking a deep understanding of key knowledge and skills.

The Common Core changes this, representing a fundamental shift in the teaching and learning process. The Common Core focuses intensely on a smaller number of standards that have been directly linked to success in college and career. Rather than running through a checklist of dozens of bureaucratic standards, students strive for true mastery in targeted areas. There is an emphasis on creativity, critical thinking, and real-world applications.

The Common Core began development in 2007, emerging out of conversations between states about aligning common standards. As the Core developed, universities and the national councils for subject areas (math, language arts, etc.) helped to identify key standards. In the years that followed, 45 states and over 100 Catholic dioceses integrated the Common Core into their own curriculum standards. The Army, the US Chamber of Commerce, the College Board, and many other organizations have publicly supported the Common Core.

In the Archdiocese, our involvement with the Common Core began in 2011. For many years, Catholic elementary schools have utilized a Graded Course of Study (GCS) developed by the Catholic Schools Office. Like all curricula, the GCS guides teachers on what students are supposed to know and be able to do by the end of the school year. The GCS for all subjects (with the exception of religion) is based upon the standards of the state of Ohio. We essentially take Ohio’s standards, ratchet them up to represent more rigorous instruction, and infuse them with our Catholic identity.

Two years ago, the state of Ohio began adopting the Common Core. Like prior years, we are adapting Ohio’s standards, which now include a tie to the Common Core, making them more rigorous, and infusing them with the Catholic faith. The vocabulary is important here: We are adapting, not adopting. As with any educational movement, we are taking the best of the Common Core and making it our own, to the ultimate benefit of our students.

Most of the concerns that have reached me over the past few weeks have revolved around the political dimensions of the Common Core. I have never seen the Common Core as a political issue. Some have suggested that the Common Core represents a political over-reach of the current federal administration. Others claim that the federal government will use data mining and other techniques to track students. I sense that certain groups are imposing political agendas onto the Common Core, and this has aroused great passion on both sides of the political spectrum.

Regardless of the concerns, we are at liberty to use the Common Core as we see fit. As private schools, we can harness the benefits of the Common Core while avoiding any potential political entanglements.

Catholic schools have a longstanding and well-deserved reputation for academic excellence. Even more importantly, our schools have a proven record of passionately forming and awakening the faith within our students. I feel that the Common Core, adapted to fit our needs, provides an opportune complement to our mission. I am tremendously optimistic about the future of our Catholic schools. The release last fall of *Lighting the Way: A Vision for Catholic Schools* has filled our Archdiocese with energy and hope for the future of Catholic school education. Catholic schools are a beacon of hope for over 45,000 students in southwest Ohio, and I know that this success will continue for generations to come. God has blessed our schools, and I know that his continued blessing and inspiration will guide us far into the future.

DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

Roman Catholic theology is comprised of the teachings of the Catholic Church, which bases its conclusions on Scripture and Sacred Tradition, as interpreted by the Magisterium. The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is very proud of its tradition of uniting the strongest of this Catholic theology within our schools with an intense academic rigor. As successful as our schools have been, we refuse to rest on our history of strong Catholic identity and high academic achievement and allow complacency to set into our program. To that end, we introduced the idea of the Catholic Common Core Initiative within all the schools in our school system.

The United States Department of Education put forth the idea of a Common Core State Standards protocol and it was quickly endorsed by two different groups in the early 2000's. The basic idea was to bring diverse state curricula into alignment with each other by following the principles of standards-based educational reform. These two separate groups focused initially on math and the various areas of reading/language arts in the public schools. To date, these are the only two subject areas that have reached a national consensus on implementation.

There has been some controversy over the past several months about the nature, scope and perhaps even fear of the federal government's perceived intrusion into school programming, and as an extension, a child's education and development. Many pundits have expressed the concern over certain agendas that might be promoted over existing/established curricula and new ideas. These same pundits claim the Common Core State Standards Initiative is positioning what is being taught in public schools as running contrary to constitutional rights and national ideals; and therefore public schools, and the children that attend, might also be at some sort of risk.

Our Catholic schools have utilized curriculums and standards that have many similarities with those in our public school counterparts for many years...even decades. However, the key element in our programming is how much further we are able to go with our prescribed standards. Perhaps because of the dedication of our staffs, the demographics of our student population or a combination therein, our Catholic schools have always had the opportunity of doing more than what was expected in our public schools while being infused with the gift of Jesus Christ. Parents are paying a premium for their children to attend our Catholic schools and

therefore have an expectation of receiving more in the process. The Catholic schools have always delivered on that expectation.

So how are Catholic schools defined in light of these sweeping educational reforms? For one, Catholic schools never, ever, lose sight of the mission to teach the Gospel values of Jesus Christ that are essential to the Catholic faith and to the development of the next generation of Catholics in West Virginia. Second, Catholic schools must continue to strive for a level of academic rigor that meets the highest of expectations of the Bishop, the parents and the communities served. Lastly, Catholic schools will refuse to allow gaps in the educational program to develop because of inattentive leadership. Catholic schools will work within the framework of the Common Core State Standards, but the standards our schools will adopt will be reflective of our Catholic values and traditions.

There have been many discussion forums where the Common Core State Standards protocol, as it is being delivered in the public school sector, has been dismissed as an overreaching program of the Federal or state governments to take control over the American school system. There have been claims of “data-mining” public school students’ responses, mandated delivery models, common pacing and the removal of teacher creativity in the learning process. These fears have never been put onto the Catholic school program and in good conscience could never be put on our program. Rest assured that the public schools in West Virginia and the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston have never assessed, delivered content or governed their schools in a similar fashion...and we won’t start now.

Our Catholic schools will welcome the research that comes from the strong data that aligns the Common Core State Standards, associated with the math and reading/language arts, necessary for high achievement within our schools. However, our Catholic schools will continue to invest considerable time and educator talent to make sure these standards are reflective of our Catholic identity and rigor for which the Catholic schools have been celebrated. There is no one size fits all model in Catholic education. Our Catholic students are celebrated for their diversity, social awareness and independent thought. Our Catholic school programs will continue to promote Gospel values, academic excellence, social justice and personal fulfillment throughout the State of West Virginia.

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston’s Catholic Common Core Initiative will make our outstanding program even better. Our Catholic schools have always been a tremendous resource for the faith community. The value added with the Catholic Common Core Initiative in our schools will guarantee our success of our children as they face the challenges ahead. The Catholic Common Core Initiative strives to assist our Catholic educators in developing excellent school-based curriculum that faithfully implements the Common Core State Standards and effectively integrates elements of Catholic Identity with honesty and integrity.

DIOCESES OF ILLINOIS

*The Common Core and the Catholic School:
A Statement by the Superintendents of the Catholic Dioceses in Illinois*

Catholic school education is rooted in excellence: our excellence in academics flows from our excellence in faith formation. Both faith and scholarship reflect our mission and our belief in the effectiveness and long-term vitality of our Catholic schools. Without our faith-based mission, we would not be Catholic schools. Without academic excellence, we would not be schools of learning. Without the freedom to accomplish our mission, we would not be true to the Teachings of Jesus Christ upon whom our Church is founded and upon which our schools stand. As the Superintendents of Schools in the six arch/dioceses in the State of Illinois, we support the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative (CCCII), a national working group that involves collaboration between Catholic universities, corporations and sponsors invested in Catholic education, and the National Catholic Educational Association. The CCCII has two goals: (1) to assist Catholic schools and dioceses with the design and implementation of the Common Core standards within the culture and context of a Catholic school curriculum; and (2) to infuse the faith, principles, values, and social justice themes in the mission and Catholic identity of our schools with the Common Core standards (www.catholicschoolstandards.org). In every sense, CCCII goes “beyond” the Common Core State Standards.

It is within the environment of the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative that we maintain the integrity of our mission and to the expectations of those whom we serve. In themselves, Common Core State Standards are not a curriculum. They do not dictate our curriculum, instructional methodologies, and sequence of topics or materials used. What the Common Core does establish are clear, measurable goals and outcomes for what our students should know, understand, or be able to do at the end of a grade or course of study. Standards are not new to our instructional purpose. Curriculum in our schools previously focused on diocesan curricular standards and the Illinois Learning Standards, which we adopted and aligned to core academic areas. Similarly, the Common Core standards are an outcomes-based vehicle that seeks the best instructional methods for educating our children. In Catholic schools, our constant emphasis on creativity, critical and analytical thinking, and real-world application with a Catholic worldview will guide our students to academic success, and therefore, to college and career readiness. Academic rigor is a commitment that our Catholic schools embrace. The Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative does not compromise this commitment. With the infusion of our Catholic identity, we are in control of the learning process within our schools; it is the *academic freedom* that we enjoy as nonpublic schools. We will determine what to adapt from the Common Core standard according to what best fits our unique mission. We will never allow the faith and the education of our children to be comprised. Vigilance and adherence to the **Truth**, upon which our Church stands and upon which the mission of Catholic education resides, will always be our focus in the Diocese of Belleville, Archdiocese of Chicago, Diocese of Joliet, Diocese of Peoria, Diocese of Rockford, and Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Our schools will continue to be places of learning where our primary mission is to ensure our children have an authentic encounter with Jesus Christ. We support the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative and would encourage our constituents to trust that we will remain true to the mission of Catholic education and to the formation of the children that God has entrusted to our care. Giving young people the tools of college and career readiness has long been a Catholic school tradition and commitment. We will continue to be centers of learning and communities of love.

DIOCESE OF ERIE

During last school year (2012-2013) the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for mathematics were implemented in our elementary and middle schools. The English language arts Common Core State Standards will be implemented this school year (2013-2014) at the elementary and middle school level. There have been negative comments being made in public forums against the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. This statement will hopefully relieve any concerns that parents and community members might have about the decision of the Diocese of Erie to implement the Common Core State Standards.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that established a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics. The standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter credit bearing entry courses in two or four year college programs or enter the workforce. The standards are clear and concise to ensure that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of the expectations in reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics in school.

The CCSS do not tell a teacher how to teach the concepts, when during the year the concepts need to be taught, or what resources to use to teach the standards. The CCSS do provide the teacher with a concise list of objectives that each student needs to master to successfully move along the educational spectrum.

It has been said that in the past schools in the U.S. have taught a mile wide and an inch deep. Teachers try to cover everything within a school year and not focus on any topics in depth. The CCSS provide fewer standards to cover per year, with the intent that there would be greater focus and depth given to the standards that should be taught.

Please be assured that our Catholic Identity and our mission will never be compromised. “An excellent Catholic School has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st century skills, and Gospel values implemented through effective instruction” (*CCCII). Our schools exist to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. We envision education as a lifelong process that can actualize the full human and spiritual potential of all people, calling them to discover, internalize, proclaim, and live the Gospel message and to grow in faith.

Brochures about math CCSS and English language arts CCSS are available for parents along with all of the particular standards for math and English language arts at the Parent Resources link on the Catholic Schools Office website (www.eriescd.org/schools.asp).

*CCCII – Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative

DIOCESE OF HARTFORD

With the full roll-out of the Common Core State Standards occurring in all public schools in Connecticut during the 2013-2014 academic year, many parents wonder what, exactly, it means for their children. Dr. Dale R. Hoyt, superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Hartford,

spells out the relationship between the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford and the Common Core initiative.

Common Core is the short name for the Common Core State Standards initiative, a national effort to move educational standards in all schools toward uniformity. It is not a curriculum. Currently, the Common Core standards are written for the study of mathematics and English language arts.

The Office of Catholic Schools has worked to align the Common Core standards with the archdiocesan curriculum standards, even though the archdiocesan curriculum standards meet or exceed those of the Common Core. For example, persuasive writing is emphasized in the archdiocesan curriculum standards and is limited in Common Core. In the study of mathematics, fractions are taught in third through fifth grade using Common Core, and are introduced in the first grade in the archdiocesan curriculum standards.

At the same time, it should be noted that the Archdiocese of Hartford's curriculum standards are used in various dioceses throughout the country, and have received accolades for being relevant and rigorous in their academic approach to teaching and learning.

We in the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools make certain that the archdiocesan curriculum standards infuse Catholic teaching and doctrine in order to support our vision for students to encounter the living God and to critically search for knowledge, meaning and truth. For the school year of 2012-2013, the Iowa Assessment standardized test scores indicated that students in the Archdiocese of Hartford were above grade level equivalencies; and graduates are headed down a road for success that encourages lifelong learning, surpassing the College Board's college and career benchmarks as supported by the Advanced Placement (AP) Tests and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

The Common Core is designed to "provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn ..." It is a set of minimum, hence, core, academic standards. The archdiocesan standards, aligned to the Common Core, more broadly embrace a richly developed program of teaching and learning, strongly integrated with the Catholic intellectual tradition. The National Catholic Educational Association (www.ncea.org) has released a position paper on Common Core, and Dr. Mary Jane Krebbs, a professor of St. John's University in Queens, N.Y., and a consultant to the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools, has provided clarity with regard to the Common Core movement and its relationship to Catholic schools. Dr. Krebbs suggests that the Common Core represents a renewed commitment and an opportunity to reflect on exactly what makes good schools good, as well as on what makes good Catholic schools great. "In addition to the traditional purposes of schooling – teaching children, alleviating poverty, perpetuating our cultural heritage, producing intelligent and participatory citizens, encouraging innovation and creativity, etc. – Catholic schools encourage the development of a moral conscience, create a community of faith based on Gospel values and produce intelligent, participatory members of the future Catholic Church." Catholic school educators and the archdiocesan curriculum standards aim to reach both sets of goals. Under the direction of Valerie Mara, assistant superintendent of academics, and the Office of Catholic Schools' Curriculum Commission, strategic efforts are made to write archdiocesan curriculum standards that align with and exceed the Common Core.

Mrs. Mara and the Curriculum Commission ensure the Catholic identity and the integrity of the educational program of a Catholic school.

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Talking Points

The Catholic, Lutheran and Christian schools that comprise the Michigan Association of Non-public Schools (MANS) have a long standing commitment to academic excellence rooted in their faith based missions.

Excellent faith-based schools provide a rigorous academic curriculum that integrates faith and knowledge. Faith-based administrators and teachers continually seek the best instructional methods for educating students.

MANS members will utilize portions of the CCSS that do not interfere with the faith-based standards of its member schools. All students must be challenged to higher-level thinking and skills. Much of the CCSS can be a valuable contribution to the work being done in faith-based schools across Michigan.

MANS views the CCSS as a set of high quality academic expectations and a significant component to the alignment of K-12 curriculum to prepare students for college and career readiness.

MANS members will take into account the CCSS much like it has other state standards in the past to reap all of the benefits available to enhance the faith-based education offered by the Christian, Lutheran and Catholic schools.

The CCSS establish clear, measurable goals for students that assist teachers seeking best instructional methods for educating students. The CCSS is not a curriculum. Instead it guides the way instruction takes place and presents standards that can be woven into our own successful, faith-based curriculum content.

DIOCESE OF LAREDO

To ensure that, the curriculum standards of St. Augustine High School are being reviewed by Loyola University so as to meet the “common core standards, college readiness standards and the national standards and benchmarks for effective Catholic secondary schools,” she said. But the diocese applies nationally recognized standards at all levels. “We are undertaking a new curriculum alignment initiative in grades kindergarten through 12 to ensure that rigor is evident in all our instructional endeavors,” Vida said. “The Diocesan performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is at the 60 percentile and above. Our new goal is to reach the 70 percentile within the next 2 years.”

DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND, THE ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY, THE DIOCESE OF RENO, AND THE DIOCESE OF TUCSON. DIOCESES OF CAMDEN AND PATERSON IN NEW JERSEY; THE DIOCESE OF JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI; AND THE DIOCESE OF SAVANNAH, GEORGIA.

WITH ACE out of Notre Dame

The [ACE Collaborative for Academic Excellence \(ACAE\)](#) began conducting workshops this summer with Catholic school leaders and teacher teams in the Dioceses of Camden and Paterson in New Jersey; the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi; and the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia.

The ACAE, based at the University of Notre Dame, continues to work with educators in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, the Diocese of Reno, and the Diocese of Tucson. The collaborations are a sustained professional development program, providing a framework to strengthen curriculum, instruction, and assessment in Catholic schools.

Over a two-year period, the ACAE holds extensive workshops and other instructional gatherings at the diocesan level, bringing teachers together for a structured, informed discussion of current practices and possible next steps.

These teams are supported as they take greater ownership in their pursuit of continuous improvement in curriculum and instruction. The ACAE also supports the administrators in implementing the plans that emerge, but the plans and the ongoing assessments are generated by the local educators.

Schools around the country are looking at their own practices and needs in light of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, which sets national guidelines for what students should learn in different grades. Collaborative training helps educators build upon the new common core.

The ACAE team members recently have begun the two-year process of collaboration-building in Camden, Paterson, Jackson, and Savannah. The latter diocese [announced on its website that teachers from all diocesan schools began training in curriculum, instruction, and assessment](#) on July 30.

ACAE assistance for the collaborative teams of educators comes in many forms. The support includes exclusive digital resources—a wiki for discussions spanning multiple schools, plus video clips and other links to be shared among these collaborative communities. The Alliance for Catholic Education has developed a computer application (app) that helps teachers and principals gather data about classroom situations that can lead later to fruitful assessments of instructional practice.

"The treasure of Catholic schools lies in the committed teachers and principals who staff them," says as well as senior director of ACE's M.Ed. program.

"Their aspiration for excellence is best served when they engage together in sustained discussions about essential issues and implement subsequent decisions as professional teams,"

Doyle continues. "The purpose of the Collaborative is to facilitate these discussions and the decision-making that follows."

The ACE Collaborative will follow up its summer workshops with its annual fall conference, to be held in early November. The conference brings together curriculum coordinators from participating dioceses for sharing and also introduces the Collaborative to new dioceses.

ACE offers the Collaborative's resources to dioceses through Doyle and other experienced educators. The ACAE builds upon expertise from Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education, a leading provider of talent and resources for Catholic schools around the country. ACE conducts several initiatives with the overall mission to sustain, strengthen, and transform Catholic schools.

The Service through Teaching (STT) initiative, which grants the M.Ed. degree, has sent forth some 1,500 graduates to teach in Catholic elementary and secondary schools since it was founded in 1993. STT teachers currently serve in several elementary and secondary schools in the Diocese of Jackson.

DIOCESE OF EL PASO *

As part of a plan to strengthen Catholic education in the Diocese of El Paso, the Catholic schools will begin offering a more rigorous curriculum with the adoption of the Common Core Standards. Previously, schools in our diocese have used the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as the basis for their curriculum. Now, over a two year period, El Paso Catholic schools will begin implementing the new Common Core Standards.

According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the new standards were established "by the highest, most effective models from states across the country and countries around the world, and provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live."

Although Texas is one of three states in the U.S. not adopting the Common Core Standards, the Diocese of El Paso has made the decision to adopt the standards in order to offer a more rigorous curriculum. During the past two years, we have looked at other dioceses that use the CCS, such as the Archdiocese of Hartford. The Archdiocese of Hartford uses the CCS for Connecticut and incorporates the teachings of the Church into their curriculum. As we move forward with the English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, we will adopt some of the elements from the Archdiocese of Hartford, especially the Church teachings and their pacing, but other aspects of the curriculum will be developed locally.

Our teachers have been in-serviced in the Common Core Standards and a representative group of teachers met with consultants in April to prioritize the Standards in ELA and Math. Teachers from our elementary schools will meet in June to develop a unit that they can then use as a template for future units based on our priorities. Social Studies and Science guides will be developed in the next two years. As we move forward, we will also be implementing the new Religion curriculum guide, which has been adapted from the Archdiocese of Hartford and the

Framework for Adolescent Catechesis from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The high school curriculum follows the outline and sequencing set by the USCCB.

ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

The mission statement of the Office of Catholic Education boldly proclaims that: Catholic Schools form Catholic students to be full and practicing members of the Church, are centers of evangelization that call all to live fully the message of Jesus Christ, and are centers of academic excellence that rigorously prepare students to be life-long learners and contributing members of the global community. From this we draw our primary focus, the faith formation of our students. Of major importance, too, is the academic preparation our students receive which will enable them to be college- and career-ready upon commencement from their experience in archdiocesan schools. This document is a response to the call to prepare our students to become “contributing members of the global community.” It is the product of an in-depth study of the data related to existing curriculum, current research, input from respected professional organizations and hours of intense work and dialogue on the part of teachers and administrators from throughout the archdiocese. Our data study encouraged us to build on the patterns of excellence which have been a hallmark of education in Archdiocesan schools. A review of the existing curriculum and input from many teachers called us to re-focus curriculum content so that instruction and learning would incorporate higher-level thinking and in-depth teaching. At the recommendation of the National Governors’ Association, we are moving forward with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards as the basis for curriculum content. Included in this document are the Common Core State Standards for this level as well as the implementation guides prepared by the curriculum committee members who spent a great deal of time working on them. As we move forward in the period of transition to full adoption of the Standards and to assessing archdiocesan students using national assessments, we feel confident that our teachers will continue to move forward with the same dedication that will prepare our students to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the best students both nationally and internationally

Level best: (Philadelphia) Archdiocesan schools adopts Common Core Standards

By Jim Gauger

When elementary and secondary students return to archdiocesan schools next month they will have a new learning program, one which is touted as better at preparing them for 21st-century careers.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is being implemented in archdiocesan elementary and secondary schools in the areas of English language arts and mathematics. Science and social studies are planned for inclusion in the 2012-2013 school year.

“For the past five years we had been looking at our own curriculum,” said Mary Rochford, archdiocesan superintendent of schools. “There was so much to teach at each grade level. It was difficult to give depth at every area of the curriculum. When we looked at Common Core, we saw that that work had been done. We studied it, and it was a great time for us to adopt it.” “The most significant thing is that the curriculum is no longer a mile wide with so many topics,” said Sister Edward William Quinn, I.H.M., archdiocesan director of elementary curriculum and instruction. “In the past there may have been 300 topics to teach during the course of a year. Now we will teach priority topics in depth. We want to make the students career-ready. The curriculum is designed with that intention in mind. It is a very interdisciplinary approach in which literacy permeates the curriculum. You are using thinking skills to solve the problem.”

The “priority topics” can be found on the web site www.catholicschools-phl.org under parent resources. Rochford has done much of the background work for the CCSS and has informed teachers and administrators about the new program through newsletters, in-service days, DVDs and presentations.

Rochford explained the CCSS this way in one of the newsletters: “The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (Common Core State Standards). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce. The NGA Center and Common Core State Standards received initial feedback on the draft standards from national organizations representing, but not limited to, teachers, post secondary educators (including community colleges), civil rights groups, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Following the initial round of feedback, the draft standards were opened for public comment, receiving nearly 10,000 responses.”

Rochford also explained the thinking behind the integration of elementary and secondary teachers: “The idea of integrating elementary and secondary teachers supports our belief that curriculum should be seamless across our schools in grades K to 12. Since this was a basic introduction to the Common Core State Standards and not a grade-specific topic, it is hoped that everyone could learn from the presentation.... Currently and in the past, we have allowed schools to teach literacy in the manner in which the publisher of that school’s reading series delineated. Moving forward, all schools will approach literacy in the same manner, leading children to attain the specific standards for the grade. This is a new idea for our schools.” The state of Pennsylvania adopted the core standards in 2010, and 48 states have currently done so. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is the first diocese in the state to adopt the Common Core State Standards, Rochford said, noting that the School District of Philadelphia will adopt the standards in 2012-2013.

“Since we were already working on our curriculum before Common Core came out, it gave us a jump start,” she said. “It dovetailed at the right time. We were prepared and ready for September 2011.” The complaint the superintendent kept hearing from the Archdiocese’s teachers is that the curriculum was too large. The teachers felt they couldn’t give enough time to any one topic, which is why priority topics will be introduced. “We listen to our teachers,” Rochford said.

Despite the many successes of Catholic education as illustrated by the large amount of scholarship money awarded each year (4,229 students received \$270,211,116 in 2011), there are parents who still think public schools have a better curriculum, Rochford said. Using the Core Standards will level the playing field, she added “In our curriculum we integrate the Catholic faith throughout,” Rochford said. “What does the Church tell us? How to be fair. How to be honest. We will be teaching the students the right way. We’re not adopting a secular curriculum. We’re not trying to be like a public school. We’re very Catholic, and very competitive.” One of the most important advantages of the Core Curriculum is its universality. “If a student moves to another state, the student won’t be lost since both states are using the Common Core Standards,” Sister Edward William said. “That came out of the research of why students were falling behind. They didn’t have a common curriculum.” Sister Edward William said learning algebra skills will take place “from kindergarten through 11th grade. We will build through the curriculum.” Dr. Carol Cary, director of secondary education, said strong reading skills will be emphasized. “The Common Core Standards have been generated on the depth of knowledge rather than the breadth of knowledge,” she explained. Although there will be fewer topics, those that are covered will be covered more in depth, Cary said. “In writing over four years the students will study three types — narrative, argumentative and expository,” she said. “There will be a little less focus on creative writing. Those three types will get students career-ready. They will be able to write for college or for business.” Critical reading will also be emphasized. “We expect the students to get close to the text, analyze, evaluate the reading, literary and informational reading,” Cary said. “The other big change in grades 9 through 12 is to expose the students to nonfiction — historical documents, texts of speeches, (and) science reading. We want to integrate across other disciplines.” The trendsetting aspect of the Common Core Standards will help archdiocesan schools in the areas of marketing and competing with public schools. “We are ahead in the adoption and the implementation stages,” Cary said. “We are ahead of the curve, and we are doing it in a timely fashion.” The tools the schools will be using to help students adjust to the challenge of working in a global economy were outlined in another newsletter from Superintendent Rochford: “College- and career-readiness standards have been incorporated into the K-12 standards, as was promised in the March 10, 2010 draft. The criteria that we used to develop the college- and career-readiness standards, as well as these K-12 standards are:

- Aligned with college and work expectations;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Informed by top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and,
- Evidence and/or research-based.”

In an earlier story in *The Catholic Standard & Times*, the curriculum was described this way: “In English language arts, the standards require certain critical content for all students, including America’s founding documents, foundational American literature and Shakespeare. “In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking and listening. “The remaining decisions about what content should be taught are determined at the state and local levels.”

“In mathematics, the standards build a base from whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals. Such a blueprint is designed to support a student’s ability to learn and to apply more demanding math concepts and procedures.” This year, for the first time, all 10th grade students in the 17 archdiocesan high schools will use the same English Language Arts textbook. In June 2012, students in ninth and tenth grades will take an online assessment of the Common Core Standards. “The Common Core Standards are rigorous,” Dr. Cary said. “We need to increase rigor if we want to compete globally. This is the right movement for education at this time. We’re in the forefront of this change.”

DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR

History

In January 2010 teacher representatives from almost all the schools attended an initial work meeting where they began to look at the Wisconsin State Standards and the 2000 Diocesan Mathematics Curriculum. Teacher teams worked on extrapolating the standards.

During the 2010-2011 school year, work continued but the State of Wisconsin adopted the national Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and a decision needed to be made. The team chose to adopt the new Common Core State Standards. With this a smaller core group of teachers came together to format and extrapolate these standards. In the fall of 2011, two key middle school teachers worked to analyze the middle school algebra component based on the High School Common Core State Standards.

In January 2012, a draft scope and sequence was sent to each school for all the teachers to identify the Introductory and Mastery levels of each skill. Guidelines went into effect in August 2012.

Diocese of Madison

We have all heard much in the media about the importance of our schools, and the importance of holding our students to high expectations and academic standards.

“Catholic Schools Raise the Standards,” the theme for Catholic Schools Week, echoes the popular news but reflects something which Catholic schools have been doing since St. Elizabeth Ann Seton opened St. Joseph Catholic School in 1810.

The school educated girls who, at that time, had significantly fewer educational opportunities than boys, and provided them with a solid academic foundation as well as skills necessary to make a living. Most importantly however, the Catholic school provided its students with a firm education in the Catholic faith. This ensured that students not only received a practical education, but that they learned to model their lives on Gospel values — the standards given to us by Christ himself.

Catholic schools have long held students to higher academic standards, striving to develop the talents and potential of every student to their fullest, and holding high expectations for all students. This year Catholic schools in the Diocese of Madison are in the process of implementing new academic standards in the areas of language, math, science, social studies, and technology.

These standards align with and exceed the national “common core” standards that have been adopted by the state of Wisconsin. They will help ensure that our students receive an outstanding academic education, perform at consistently high levels as evidenced on national tests, and are prepared to excel at the next level of education.

While the academic success of our students is well documented, the purpose of Catholic schools goes far beyond that of educating students to be active, contributing members of society.

We educate students not only to contribute to society, but to transform it through lives of service lived in accordance with the Gospel message. In order to do this successfully, each and every student in a Catholic school must know and love Christ and the truth that He proclaims.

This makes the new catechetical standards that were introduced this fall and are being implemented during this Year of Faith, the most important standards of all. They are the standards on which all others rest. For more information on the new catechetical standards, visit www.madisondiocese.org

While the academic standards ensure that we prepare students for success in this world, the catechetical standards ensure that we remain faithful to our mission of preparing students to transform this world by building the kingdom of God, serving others, and living lives that are holy that we may seek heaven and eternal life with Christ.

BISMARCK DIOCESE

Common Core

Common Core is an initiative that will help move our educational process into the 21st century with true critical thinking and an enhancement of the academic process in our schools. With the addition of the Catholic Initiative (from St John's University in New York) we can utilize Common Core to bring our faith closer to our curriculum in all subjects.

About the Common Core Standards

The Mission Statement of **Common Core** is to "provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy."

Common Core at Light of Christ

Here at the Light of Christ Catholic Schools of Excellence we have chosen to adopt the Common Core Standards as a 'foundation.' This foundation will allow all of the schools in our system to develop a common basis to build upon. Since we are a private school, we are not mandated to comply with Common Core, its required textbooks, lessons, etc. Instead, we are able to use the CC Standards, which provide a helpful outline and interaction between the various subject matters, along with textbooks and resources that align with our Catholic Faith, to engage our students in the critical thinking process.

A national working group has begun the [Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative](#) (CCCII) to develop and disseminate resources and guidelines to assist Catholic elementary and secondary schools in integrating elements of Catholic identity (Catholic values, Scripture, Church social teachings, encyclicals, etc.) into curriculum and instruction based on the Common Core State Standards.

The initial phase of CCCII focuses on K-8 English/Language Arts/ Literacy. Resources for other subjects and for 9-12 curriculum will be developed in later phases.

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO

http://www.sacatholicschools.org/news_archive/2012-2013/DCSNews_130118.pdf

The Archdiocese is considering adopting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for 2013-14. The committees have studied the various standards within the content areas (National, TEKS, Common Core, and ITBS) and have identified the Common Core as being a well-constructed document that is similar in content to the TEKS but is presented in a manner teachers found useful. With 45 states having already adopted the CCSS, as well as over 100 Catholic dioceses (including several in Texas), the implications are significant. The CCSS has already impacted the publishing industry for text book alignment and providing a significant increase in the available teacher resources tied to CCSS. The NCEA and national standardized tests (ITBS) are aligning with the CCSS. Additionally, it is expected that college admission processes, as well as the ACT and SAT testing process, will be impacted by the shift in standards. The CCSS focuses on increasing the depth of what is being taught. It is intended to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.

DIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GIhxyjAuyXKcIKJ-YInzJXtfN67y_uUEb4xTitrsJw/edit?usp=sharing&pli=1

Response to Inquiries Regarding Common Core Standards

Thank you for writing to me with your concerns about the Common Core Standards. Kentucky has been one of the early states to adopt the common core, and so we have some experience in our Catholic schools with this adoption. Actually the common core has been

experienced in Kentucky as a positive way to improve standards in a state that has greatly needed improvement in many public school systems. In general the Common Core is designed to increase, not decrease, academic rigor.

We also benefit in Kentucky from a system that allows our Catholic schools to pick the best from some of these educational innovations, but keep our own approaches that may better serve the focus on faith and academic rigor that characterizes our Catholic schools.

Our experience with the common score standards in the Archdiocese of Louisville has been very different than what is described in the article you sent. Non-public schools in Indiana and other states across the country are much more closely aligned with public school mandates through state regulations requiring adoption of specific standards and participation in state assessment programs. In Kentucky, non public schools do not have that requirement and have autonomy to make decisions based on the vision and purpose of their schools. In the Archdiocese of Louisville, we have a regular cycle of curriculum content review and design. Our archdiocesan curriculum coordinator brings together a committee of Catholic school teachers to review and revise our curriculum framework as needed.

When performing our regular review of the math curriculum 4 years ago, the draft of the common core mathematics standards was available, and we decided to compare it to our mathematics curriculum framework. We noted many common areas and existing alignment of rigorous expectations. We also noted several missing areas in the common core standards, such as patterning in kindergarten, and we decided to maintain what we had. We also noted several areas of less rigorous expectations, and again, we maintained what we had. Generally speaking, you can see many of the common core mathematics standards in our existing curriculum framework as they matched what we currently had or enhanced our existing framework. However, we also made intentional decisions not to include information as it did not reflect the standards we wanted for our Catholic schools.

We have had a similar committee in place to review our English/language arts curriculum over the last year, and this summer that group will compare the English/language arts common core standards to our existing curriculum framework. We anticipate we will make changes based on our existing standards. For example, we already know that we will continue our expectation that kindergarten students know all letters rather than “most” letters as articulated in the common core standards.

This summer, our professional development institute for teachers has an intentional focus on common core standards to give teachers additional best practices and strategies for their teaching. We use a nationally-normed standardized achievement test, the Terra Nova 3, to assess our students. This assessment gives us excellent information on our students’ progress and our overall curriculum.

Since we are not compelled to follow specific public regulations about these matters, we have the ability to move according to our timeline and follow our cycle of consistent review with all

curriculums. We are also committed to reviewing and judging new material against our Archdiocese of Louisville Curriculum Framework to insure that our vision, purpose, and rigorous standards are met.