

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Catholic Identity

We want our children to have a Catholic education. By adapting these standards, what will happen to my school's Catholic identity?

Catholic schools must always look for ways for their students to have multiple encounters with Christ each day. There are national efforts underway to assist schools and teachers in an organized effort to provide even more links to our faith while studying various curricular areas, as teachers work towards the goals stated in the standards their schools have chosen.

Aren't the standards part of a federal program? If we adapt them, won't we have to follow federal rules?

The Common Core State Standards initiative is a state-led, bipartisan effort that is not a requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) or any other federally-funded program. Individual states, Catholic dioceses and other private schools made their own decisions about whether to adopt or adapt the standards.

There is no mandate for any Catholic school to follow any federal rules related to the use of the Common Core State Standards.

## Common Core

What are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of high-quality academic expectations that define both the knowledge and skills all students should master by the end of each grade level or course of study in order to be on track for success in college or in a career. They have been adopted by more than 40 states and approximately 100 dioceses from across the country have adapted them for use in their schools.

All Catholic schools diligently protect the teaching of the faith no matter what standards they have chosen to use. This website works to provide teachers and parents with information about standards. It also exists to provide resources so that all teachers have access to quality Catholic resources that they can use to reach any standards their schools have established.

Why adapt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

The standards establish consistent learning goals for all students. They are relevant to the real world, focusing on the knowledge and skills students will need to succeed in life after high

school, in both post-secondary education and a globally competitive workforce.

Parents will know exactly what their children should learn by the end of each grade level and it will be easier for parents, teachers and students to work together toward clearly communicated and defined goals.

## Parents

### What is the role of parents in a standards based environment?

Our church clearly states that the parents are the primary educators of their children. It is through parent example and explanation that students first learn to walk, talk, play and pray.

Parents should ask for a school's standards or learning expectations. They should expect that teachers are using curriculum materials that are in compliance with Church teaching and assist their children in attaining the standards that the school has set for each grade level and course of study.

Parents should communicate with the school when they have questions and concerns. For example, if a parent reads the standards and does not think a particular standard is a good goal for their child at this time, they should address this concern with the school.

### How can parents support their children in reaching the standards?

Parents can support their children in a variety of ways. First and foremost, parents should pray with their children each day and take them to Mass every Sunday. Nothing is more important.

Parents should provide students with love and support, recognizing that all students make mistakes and that is a part of the learning process. Parents should provide the healthiest food possible so that students are ready to learn each day. Parents should also make sure that their children receive adequate sleep so that they are able to focus during school.

No goal is ever reached without practice and effort. Parents should monitor their children to assure that their homework is completed and that their children study each day.

## Curriculum

### Are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) a national curriculum?

The Common Core State Standards are not curriculum. They are standards for learning that students should achieve by the end of each grade level or a particular course of study.

By definition, a curriculum includes what is taught, when it is taught, how it is taught and how

we will measure if a student has learned the skills or content. It includes materials that are to be utilized by the students and teachers. None of these items are included in the Common Core State Standards. All of these things will be determined by principals and teachers working with students.

In Catholic schools, curriculum materials are chosen that represent Catholic teaching and tradition. As schools move away from traditional textbooks, it is important that Catholic school teachers have a place to find quality Catholic resources that support the teaching of the faith. This website strives to provide some of the resources that teachers might utilize to build quality Catholic curriculum for their students.

### [Why would Catholic schools adopt public school standards?](#)

The Common Core clearly states the goals for students for each school year which assists teachers in making instructional decisions. They help teachers focus their instruction, while allowing Catholic schools to write curriculum that can support students in achieving more.

The use of standards in Catholic schools is not new. Seminaries began using standards long ago. Standards provide teachers and students will clear goals and expectations. They provide a framework for the teaching and learning process and standards help us to insure that our students are learning and developing skills at each level of education.

Catholic schools are encouraged to consider standards from reputable sources and adapt or write standards that will allow them to meet the needs of their students. Most Catholic schools will not adopt any standards as written, but will build upon them to develop their own set of standards that are embedded with our Catholic faith.

## **EFFICACY**

### [Why don't the standards acknowledge the importance of content knowledge?](#)

The standards recognize both content and skills are important. In the English and Language Arts and Literacy standards the content includes: classic myths, America's founding documents, classic American literature and Shakespeare. The Common Core Standards create a staircase of increasing text complexity, so that students are expected to both develop their skills and apply them to more and more complex texts. In math, the standards include: whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals. In addition the standards ask students to apply mathematical thinking and reasoning. Fluency in mathematical practice is a key component.

Catholic schools are encouraged to keep and maintain the use of excellent curricular materials that continue to support student learning, while promoting the faith.

There is no research that shows these standards are effective. Why would we adopt something that is not research based?

These standards are more evidence based than most previous standards. The research includes the following: data on what knowledge and skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs, assessment data identifying college and career ready performance and comparisons to standards from high performing states and nations. In English Language Arts and Literacy, the standards are based on the NAEP Frameworks in reading and writing, which draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence. In mathematics, the standards draw on conclusions from TIMSS and other studies of high performing countries and states.

When Catholic schools use any set of standards they must monitor the effectiveness of them. Measuring student progress and achievement is critically important. Without continuous monitoring of student learning no set of standards is useful.

Monitoring of student learning and achievement should be done in a variety of ways. No one measure can be used for effective measurement. Communication to parents about how student learning is being measured and how students are progressing is important for any Catholic school to be successful.

What about Appendix B?

Appendix B provides information to teachers and administrators about possible resources, how assessments might be utilized to measure student learning and possible lessons. None of the materials in Appendix B are required. Catholic school teachers who utilize Appendix B materials will do so after much scrutiny of the materials. As has always been the practice, Catholic school teachers will screen materials to insure that they are in compliance with Church teaching and will only use items from Appendix B that are appropriate for students in Catholic schools.