



### **Meeting and Exceeding the Common Core**

In keeping with its mission, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle meet and exceed the curriculum standards required by the State of Washington and more. At this time, Washington State has adopted the Common Core, a set of standards that have gained acceptance by most of the United States. We teach what the state requires so as not to lose families from our schools who might rightly wonder if we were doing enough for their children according to the State's educational experts. However, as we have always done, we are committed to doing more, not only raising the standards of teaching and learning for all subjects, but also including the teaching of religion, which grounds the mission of the school.

The State's educational standards will vary with changes in educational philosophies and with changes of administration in Olympia and in Washington, D.C.; they will represent, to a great extent, the wisdom of the day. However, if we did not teach more than the state requires, we would be failing in our mission to offer "excellent religious, academic, and co-curricular programs." We set a higher standard than the state because we are free to do so and because we believe it is right. Therefore, we adapt the state's standards – we do not merely adopt them – and we teach a rigorous curriculum in all subjects so that the standards are grounded at all times in content that is comprehensive and integrated with topics pertinent to a Catholic education of the whole person.

The results from annual assessments of student learning show that in all subjects and in all grades, students in our Catholic schools perform at above-grade level. This is an outstanding sign of academic success, and we will continue to provide the curricula and the instruction that achieve those results. All of our schools are accredited, and from that process we have external confirmation of our schools' excellence in teaching all subjects, including religion.

Rev. Stephen C. Rowan  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools  
November, 2013

For reference: [CCSS for Washington State](#)

<http://www.k12.wa.us/corestandards/default.aspx>



## **Common Core State Standards** A Statement by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA)

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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 Statement on Common Core and Grant Received From the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

NCEA is committed to working alongside our membership in order to build upon and enhance the tradition of academic excellence, which is based on a rigorous curriculum infused with Catholic values as we prepare our students for this life and life everlasting.

Over the past several years, Catholic schools in over 100 dioceses have thoughtfully chosen how to address the Common Core State Standards. This number represents more than half the dioceses in the United States. The Common Core State Standards outline what students should learn and be able to do, but they are not the curriculum. Administrators and teachers have committed significant time and thought in determining how to adopt or adapt these standards as a base for developing rigorous curriculum rooted in Catholic values.

A curriculum includes what is taught, when it is taught, how it is taught and what materials are used. None of these items are included in any academic 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.

As a Catholic, professional membership organization, we are committed to assisting our members in their mission through ongoing professional learning. In response to our members' needs to learn more about adapting the Common Core State Standards, NCEA has conducted workshops since 2011 throughout the United States on the integration of Catholic values into a rigorous academic curriculum designed to not simply achieve, but exceed these standards.

NCEA recently received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support professional learning opportunities for teachers and administrators in dioceses and schools that have chosen to implement the new math standards. NCEA will use these funds to defray the costs for teachers and administrators attending these summer workshops and to develop an online portal for Catholic teachers and administrators to engage in discussions as well as share mathematics lessons. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has no control over the content or processes used in conducting NCEA's educational conferences.

NCEA is committed to working with our educational professionals to reach the goal as stated in the Second Vatican Council's ***Gravissimum Educationis***, *Declaration on Christian Education*:

The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community.

The National Catholic Educational Association is committed to working with our members to assure that Christ is at the center of the curriculum and pedagogy of every 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.