

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

Associate Superintendent of Schools

November 3, 2014

Dear Catholic School Parent,

In recent months, I have had the opportunity to visit with faculty, parents, and students of nearly all of the 23 schools within the Diocese of Manchester. In the course of my travels, parents have also been candid with me about their questions and concerns, and one question that comes up quite often has to do with the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). The intent of CCSSI is to “define the knowledge and skills students should gain . . . in order to graduate high school prepared to succeed in entry-level careers, introductory academic college courses, and workforce training programs” (CCSSI, 2014). CCSSI has garnered a great deal of attention recently as public and private schools consider the merits of these standards and their potential impact on students.

As those experienced in Catholic education in New Hampshire already know, nearly all of our graduating students go on to continue their studies in college and are highly successful in that setting. However, in Catholic education, curriculum standards should not only be about preparing students for success in college or the workplace. Rather, the intent of a Catholic school curriculum is to provide students experiences which will prepare them to build the Kingdom of God on earth. It is focused on the education of the whole student, which includes his or her intellectual, physical, psychological, moral, and religious capacities (Miller, 2006). Catholic education is not merely about preparing students for college or work; it is about preparing students to transform, for the better, the world which they will inherit.

In light of all of this, the Diocese of Manchester has taken the following position:

The Diocese of Manchester will not formally adopt nor require its schools to develop their curriculum solely on the basis of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Our principals and teachers, however, are expected to be cognizant of all such standards and their impact, especially for two reasons:

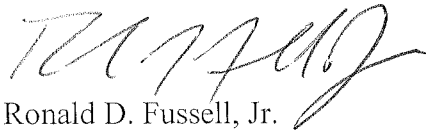
1. the content of many textbooks now takes the CCSS into account and
2. many students in our grammar schools go on to public high schools and we have an obligation to make sure they are prepared for that transition.

Catholic schools have a tradition of academic excellence that spans centuries. As the landscape of American education has changed over the years, Catholic school educators implemented that which fits with our educational model, but they never abandoned those principles which are so essential to the identity of our schools. That commitment continues today – we will review the CCSSI standards through the lens of what is best for our students in a manner consistent with our Catholic school identity and established tradition of academic excellence.

At the beginning of this school year, I assembled a diocesan curriculum committee of experienced administrators and educational experts to lead a process of developing curriculum standards to help our schools develop and implement curricula in keeping with their mission and identity. This will likely be an affirmation of many of our already existing processes, but it will also be an opportunity to identify areas for growth and improvement.

To that end, our goal is to update our current standards so that our teachers may continue to provide a relevant, challenging curriculum for the students entrusted to our care. Given that Catholic schools are not compelled to adopt any curriculum standards from any outside body, including CCSSI, we are in an enviable position – we can build an educational experience consistent with our Catholic identity such that your sons and daughters will be well formed human beings ready to take on the challenges of adult life.

In Christ,



Ronald D. Fussell, Jr.
Associate Superintendent of Schools

References:

Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2014). *About the standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/>

Miller, J. M. (2006). *The Holy See's teaching on Catholic schools*. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press.