

Winter 2014

Re: The Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools Stance on the Common Core State Standards

Catholic Schools have a rich tradition of partnering with families to educate the hearts and minds of children in order that they may freely accept the truth, goodness, and beauty of the Christian life. To accomplish this lofty task, faculty at the Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools (GTACS) work tirelessly to help all students meet and exceed their spiritual and academic potentials. By teaching all subjects from a faith perspective, students are able to critically analyze the world through a Catholic lens, illuminated by the light of the Gospel and teachings of the Church.

It is upon this solid and unchanging foundation that our Catholic School system struggles with the potential consequences of adopting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Most importantly, because we are not a public school, we are thankful for the autonomy and time to thoroughly evaluate and examine the CCSS to determine what aspects, if any, will help us better fulfill our mission. Based on much research, discussion, and evaluation GTACS does not plan to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) due to a number of potential problems and liabilities, which are summarized below:

Lack of Local Control

The Church has always been governed by a principle of subsidiarity and thus grants local control to her schools. Writing on this topic in 1977, The Sacred Congregation of the Faith in a document titled, *The Catholic School*, stated: *“the assigning of various responsibilities is governed by the principle of subsidiarity, and, with reference to this principle, ecclesiastical authority respects the competence of professionals in teaching and education.”* It is with this idea that we ask what might be “attached” to a national curriculum and worry about “big government” usurping state rights. More importantly, we fear losing our own local control of our curriculum if we should adopt the CCSS.

Lack of Whole Child Education

As you might imagine, these secular CCSS are not in line with the Gospel and a lack of local control, referenced above, will inhibit our ability to educate the whole child, to teach Truth, and develop a love for wisdom. The CCSS strive for college and career readiness; this we agree with, but to fulfill our mission our curriculum must also contain a supernatural vision founded on Christian Anthropology. This is what allows our school to focus on the entire Child—mind, soul, and heart

Our Curriculum is Not Broken

We also point to the fact that our curriculum is not broken. We have high academic standards that meet or exceed government education; our standardized test scores continue to attest to this. With a sound, viable, and guaranteed curriculum in place, we ask: “why change to an untested product?” For many schools, the CCSS is a vast improvement over their current curriculum—this is not the case here at GTACS.

Problems With The Actual Curriculum

Finally, there are problems with the actual curriculum. By no means do we look to provide an exhaustive list of CCSS missteps, but to share a few:

- ELA: informational text supplant rich literature where meaning and value reside and no actual English teacher on the committee.
- Math: takes a constructivist approach, standard algorithms are introduced too late, lowers expectations (i.e. no Alg. 1 in 8th grade), and there are a number of missing standards at various grades where we believe they should be.

As always, we will continue to evaluate our current curriculum and develop it in a way that best fulfills our mission of educating children to their fullest academic and spiritual potentials.