



Spring 2015

Re: Common Core Aligned Textbooks

Dear Parents:

Catholic Schools have a rich tradition of partnering with families to educate the hearts and minds of children. To accomplish this lofty task, faculty at the Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools (GTACS) work tirelessly to help all students achieve 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.

It is upon this solid and unchanging foundation that we have struggled 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. Based on much research, discussion, and evaluation GTACS has no plans to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). To name a few problems, we have concerns with the lack of local control, the inability to educate the whole child in line with Church teaching, and even concerns with the learning standards. Moreover, we point to the fact that our curriculum is not broken and has stood the test of time—something that the untested common core can not claim.

Of course each of these claims and concerns can be broken out in greater detail—if you'd like more information please do not hesitate to contact us. However, here we'd like to focus on the fact that despite us not adopting the Common Core, a number of our current textbooks claim to be Common Core “aligned.” Of course from a publisher's perspective it makes perfect sense to jump on the common core train and publish an “aligned” textbook when the majority of the country is moving in that direction.

We understand your concerns. However, please know that this alignment simply means the textbook company has included an appendix which shows how and where the various lessons line up with the standards found in the common core. A publisher is free to make alignment claims without a verification process and oftentimes textbooks have been found to be about 25 to 35 percent aligned to the set of standards by which they claim to align. In fact, many of the textbooks that claim to be common core aligned, have simply changed the cover and replaced the appendix from last year's edition that was said to be State of Michigan aligned.

This in itself is reassuring, but also know that a textbook never has and never will drive our curriculum. Any textbook is simply a resource that allows our instructors to deliver a rigorously developed curriculum steeped in gospel values and church teaching.

Thank you for the opportunity to educate your student. We will continue to examine all aspects of our textbooks, curriculum, and instruction to provide a quality whole child education. If you have any concerns or questions whatsoever do not hesitate to contact us.

Mr. Erick Chittle
Saint Francis High School, Principal

Mr. Matthew Bauman
Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools, Curriculum Director