



From the Desk of the Superintendent of Schools: Information About Common Core for Parents

*As you know, the 2012-13 academic year began a significant change for students across the country with the implementation of the new **Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)**. That educational initiative, which continues this year and has been adopted by the Archdiocese of New York, has generated misconceptions about the purpose and application of those standards.*

*This newsletter, **the first of a series of communications on the CCLS**, is offered to provide our parents with up-to-date, accurate information regarding how the CCLS are impacting Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York.*

1. Why are the CCLS important?

High standards across states will provide teachers, parents and students with a set of clear expectations that are aligned to the expectations of colleges and careers. No matter where students live, they will be provided with knowledge and skills necessary to compete with their peers across the U.S.A. and internationally.

2. What guidance do the CCLS provide to teachers?

They set clear goals and expectations for the knowledge and skills students need in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics at each grade level in order to be prepared for college and careers. It is important to make the distinction: the CCLS is a set of standards; it is not a curriculum. These standards outline broad proficiency goals for students. They do not dictate how teachers teach, but rather what content and skills students should master by the end of each grade level. Teachers will continue to follow the Archdiocesan-approved curriculum and create lesson plans and craft instruction to the individual needs of their own students.

3. Do the CCLS mandate what textbooks and resources teachers should use?

No. This is not accurate. Catholic schools are not required to use any of the texts or other resources included in the Common Core ELA appendix. Rather, the Archdiocese has equipped our teachers with our own set of resources that are on the same level of complexity, yet ensure age appropriateness and a respect for our Catholic identity. This was done because, while the majority of resources in the Common Core ELA appendix are valuable, there have been examples found in that document we believe are not appropriate for our students. It is worth noting, the CCLS have been adopted by more than 106 dioceses across the nation and endorsed by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA).

4. By what criteria were these CCLS developed?

A large body of evidence exists, including scholarly research such as the Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), as well as surveys of student skills needed in the workplace, that concludes the traditional math and ELA curriculum should now reflect international benchmarks. These benchmarks are more literacy-focused to improve student achievement, particularly in the content areas of critical thinking and analysis, writing, speaking, listening and understanding of mathematical concepts.

5. Why are there standards for only ELA and Math?

These two subject areas are the ones that contain the basic skill sets used in all other subject areas. The remaining subjects will be included in the CCLS over the next several years.

6. Has the implementation of the CCLS been challenging?

Yes. While the Archdiocese continues to endorse the merits of the CCLS, the timeline for implementation has been challenging, to say the least. Learning those standards, equipping teachers with sufficient resources (current textbooks are not aligned to the CCLS) and the level of difficulty of the year-end state tests, has created frustration and tension with this initiative. Those issues are being addressed, as we continue to move forward with the implementation of the CCLS.