



DIOCESE OF MADISON
BISHOP O'CONNOR CATHOLIC PASTORAL CENTER

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Dear Friends in Christ,

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:5)

Our Catholic schools are great treasures, both of the Church, and of our society. Many of our Catholic schools have been assisting parents in the education and formation of their children for well over 100 years, allowing generations of children to receive the extraordinary benefit of a Catholic education. During this time, our schools have operated from the foundation of Gospel values and the proposition that every person is a unique individual, created and loved by God who calls us to fulfill our humanity by perfecting our God given talents and skills that we may come to know and love God, transform our world through lives of heroic virtue, and merit life in Heaven with Christ for all eternity.

This has always been the goal of Catholic education, to lead our students to the Truth that is Christ. As all creation comes from Christ, this Truth encompasses all facets of the natural world and the human condition – art, history, science, mathematics, music, theology, philosophy – all academic disciplines, as well as values, morality, right, wrong, good, evil, justice, peace, wisdom etc. Catholic schools are unique because they aim to educate the whole person, mind, body, and soul that students may come to know God, know themselves, and know Christ, that they may discern His will for their lives.

Through this unique philosophy of education, Catholic schools have been educating and forming students who not only succeed scholastically, but have the knowledge, skills, moral character, confidence and the capacity to love one another. This not only furthers their success in life, but propels them to serve Christ through serving others, thus enriching our communities and transforming our world.

Today, with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards in the public schools, many parents have wondered whether or not Catholic schools can remain competitive and continue their legacy of student success if they do not follow suit and adopt the Common Core. Others have wondered whether or not Catholic schools can remain true to their mission if they adopt the Common Core.

After much research, discussion and conversation with other Catholic educators, superintendents, and bishops, we have reached several conclusions.

First, students in our Catholic schools currently receive an incomparable education, posting impressive records of academic success both at non-Catholic middle and high schools, as well as at public, private and Catholic colleges and universities. At the elementary level our schools consistently score in the top 20% of schools nationwide in every major subject area on the Iowa Assessment. At the high school level, our students' average scores on the ACT college admission test are routinely 3.5 - 4 points above the national average and 3 points above the state average. Simply put, students in our Catholic schools have been and continue to achieve at high levels, well above national averages.

Secondly, the current high levels of achievement that our students enjoy were attained using current academic standards and curriculum combined with the expertise and commitment of knowledgeable and dedicated teachers. We are committed to continuing to provide rigorous curricula rooted in a Catholic worldview, that prepares students for success in all facets of life, that they may live so as to make positive contributions to this world and merit Heaven in the next world. This has been our work for generations past, and it will continue to be our work for generations to come.

Thirdly, our record of success demonstrates that the current diocesan academic standards for K-8, coupled with the knowledge of our dedicated teachers who model their work on Christ, is a potent formula for the education and formation of our children. Our diocesan standards were created, in affirmation of the principle of subsidiarity, by those who best know our students and our mission – our teachers and administrators. They engaged in two years of work, provided their expertise of Catholic education, intellectual development and knowledge of our students and combined it with a careful examination of multiple sets of standards in each subject area, including the Common Core, and created our diocesan standards in religion, history, math, science, social studies and technology. Our teachers best know our students and how they learn. They know our Catholic tradition and the high expectations we hold. They produced rigorous standards that push students to excel to their full potential and are rooted in Catholic values. As a whole, our standards exceed any other set of national or state standards, and correspond to the high expectations of the Office of Catholic Schools and our principals.

Lastly, and most importantly, it is undeniably clear that the success our schools have had and continue to enjoy stems directly from the Catholic approach to education which seeks to model all things on Christ. This recognizes and affirms the dignity of each student as unique daughters and sons of Christ, and in so doing challenges students not only to acquire a “standard” level of knowledge and skills, but to realize their full, God given potential, to develop and refine these gifts and skills and then use them to better society and the lives of others through service to God and neighbor. It is precisely this focus on the development of the whole person that results not only in exemplary academic performance, but truly places our students on the path to holiness and sainthood. Our students are encouraged not only to succeed academically, but to live lives of heroic virtue. It is not the fundamental aim of Catholic education to develop the intellect for academic success alone, but to develop all the skills and faculties of the human person, oriented toward Christ and His service. It is precisely this moral orientation that guides our students in the use of their gifts and allows them to achieve great things, to transform our world and to achieve the ultimate standards - holiness in this world and Heaven in the next.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Madison will not adopt the Common Core State Standards. Rather, our parish elementary schools will continue to use our own, diocesan academic standards. Further reasons for this may be found on the accompanying document, “Frequently Asked Questions.” The Diocese of Madison stands firm, both behind our standards, and behind the mission and philosophy of Catholic education which far exceeds any other common standards.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Michael J. Lancaster
Superintendent



Most Rev. Robert C. Morlino
Bishop of Madison