

Catholic Review Column: Catholicism, Our Common Core

Much has been said and written about the latest national educational standards known as the Common Core State Standards or, more simply, Common Core. As those affiliated with the public school systems publicly debate the merits and shortcomings of Common Core, I thought it may be helpful to discuss the relationship between archdiocesan schools and the Common Core, and hopefully dispel a few myths along the way.

It is important to acknowledge from the outset that the Common Core State Standards are just that, standards. They are not curriculum. A select group of teachers, under the supervision of Dr. Barbara Edmondson, the archdiocese's superintendent of schools, drafts the curriculum for our schools, which gets regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with the latest educational standards to ensure the rigorous academic instruction that is expected of a Catholic school in the archdiocese. In conducting such reviews, we follow the guidance of Dominican Sister John Mary Fleming, executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop's Secretariat for Education, to "scrub the standards to make sure they're ours at the end of the day." In other words, we reject any component that may conflict with Catholic teaching. Further, it is our expectation that every classroom in our archdiocese will strive not only to meet these standards, but exceed them.

Unlike our public school counterparts, our schools are able to be selective as to how to implement standards. Neither the archdiocese nor any of its schools receives money to incorporate the standards - either fully or partially - and we reject the use of those controversial and objectionable tools, resources and techniques that have been affiliated with Common Core and which have been the subject of so much debate.

As a Catholic school system, we reject anything that conflicts with our teachings and/or our core mission, or which in any way would adversely affect the Catholic identity of our schools. We place the highest value on the Catholic identity and academic reputation of our schools and will take no action that would undermine or

tarnish either.