

# What Catholics should know about

# The Common Core



The Common Core State Standards—developed with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and promoted with federal grants from the Obama administration—were adopted rapidly by many states and even some Catholic schools and dioceses, inciting much controversy.

To start, here are 10 facts that you should know:

## 1 Common Core is not mandatory for Catholic schools.

Common Core is not required in private schools. It is up to each state whether to adopt the standards as their own, and those state standards are mandatory only for public schools.

## 2 The Common Core is not intended for Catholic education.

The Common Core's stated purpose falls short of the Holy See's vision for Catholic education: "The standards... are designed to ensure students are prepared for today's entry-level careers, freshman-level college courses, and workforce training programs." Catholic education, on the other hand, does much more than college and career preparation.

## 3 Catholic schools already outperform public schools.

The Common Core responds to the failings of public schools. It can't be assumed that the standards will improve Catholic schools, which for two decades have outperformed public schools on the federal National Assessment of Educational Progress tests.

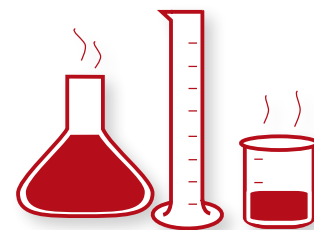


## 4 Catholic schools already prepare students for college & career.

According to the National Catholic Educational Association, Catholic high schools already have a 99 percent graduation rate, as opposed to 73 percent in public schools. Most Catholic school graduates attend four-year colleges, as opposed to fewer than half of public school graduates.

## 5 The Common Core is rushed, untested and experimental.

The Common Core was developed by a few bureaucrats using Gates Foundation funds and then "sold" to the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to avoid public scrutiny and accountability. It became popular to educators and then legislators as the Obama administration dangled a promise of federal grants, causing many states to adopt Common Core standards even



before they were completed. The standards have never been tested, and there is no evidence that they will achieve their objectives.

## **6 The Common Core is (ultimately) about textbooks and curriculum.**

The Common Core’s proponents note that standards are not the same as curricula, textbooks or teaching, and so adopting the Common Core does not—in itself—control what happens in the classroom. But, textbook publishers and testing companies are already conforming to the Common Core, and the standards do prompt changes in curricula and teaching.

## **7 The Common Core may hinder students’ education and formation.**

The standards demand greater emphasis on reading informational texts, with a corresponding decrease in great literature. Some recommended (not required) texts have been morally problematic. Math standards are lowered, and some of the expectations are simply not age-appropriate.

The emphasis on skills and career preparation ignores other aspects of student formation that are key to Catholic education. Proponents argue that the Common Core can be supplemented with Catholic instruction, but if the success of schools and students is measured by the Common Core standards, the natural inclination is to reduce attention to Catholic identity and student formation.

## **8 The Common Core violates the principle of subsidiarity.**

National standards tend to confine educators to a particular vision for education, which stifles innovation and threatens the independence and unique mission of Catholic schools. There is less room for decisions regarding guidelines, curriculum and other adjustments to be made on the local level.

Subsidiarity also applies to the parents’ role as first educators of their children, a fact taught clearly in the Holy See’s teaching on Catholic education. Parents have been largely absent from decisions regarding the Common Core.



## **9 The Common Core may endanger religious freedom.**

State and federal involvement in Common Core could lead to religious liberty violations. The Common Core may diminish a school’s Catholic identity, which is vital for protection from threats against religious liberty, by excluding important elements of authentic Catholic formation, emphasizing skills and practicality over vocation, and failing to teach reasoning from a foundation of truth.

## **10 Our “common core” is our Catholic faith.**

Catholic education’s success begins with its Catholic mission. Traditional classroom methods and pedagogy in Catholic schools developed precisely because of the desire to form students morally, spiritually, intellectually and socially. “Reforms” that are not rooted in the Catholic faith are unlikely to bear good fruit. The Common Core must never replace our true core values and formation.

For more about the Common Core and Catholic education visit  
[www.CatholicsOurCore.org](http://www.CatholicsOurCore.org)



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