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The Common Core and the Catholic School: A Statement by the Superintendents of the Catholic Dioceses in Illinois

Catholic school education is rooted in excellence: our excellence in academics flows from our excellence in faith formation. Both faith and scholarship reflect our mission and our belief in the effectiveness and long-term vitality of our Catholic schools. Without our faith-based mission, we would not be Catholic schools. Without academic excellence, we would not be schools of learning. Without the freedom to accomplish our mission, we would not be true to the Teachings of Jesus Christ upon Whom our Church is founded and upon which our schools stand.

As the Superintendents of Schools in the six arch/dioceses in the State of Illinois, we support the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative (CCCII), a national working group that involves collaboration between Catholic universities, corporations and sponsors invested in Catholic education, and the National Catholic Educational Association. The CCCII has two goals: (1) to assist Catholic schools and dioceses with the design and implementation of the Common Core standards within the culture and context of a Catholic school curriculum; and (2) to infuse the faith, principles, values, and social justice themes in the mission and Catholic identity of our schools with the Common Core standards (www.catholicsschoolstandards.org). In every sense, CCCII goes “beyond” the Common Core State Standards.

It is within the environment of the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative that we maintain the integrity of our mission and to the expectations of those whom we serve. In themselves, Common Core State Standards are not a curriculum. They do not dictate our curriculum, instructional methodologies, sequence of topics or materials used. What the Common Core does establish are clear, measurable goals and outcomes for what our students should know, understand, or be able to do at the end of a grade or course of study.

Standards are not new to our instructional purpose. Curriculum in our schools previously focused on diocesan curricular standards and the Illinois Learning Standards, which we adopted and aligned to core academic areas. Similarly, the Common Core standards are an outcomes-based vehicle that seeks the best instructional methods for educating our children. In Catholic schools, our constant emphasis on creativity, critical and analytical thinking, and real-world application with a Catholic worldview will guide our students to academic success, and therefore, to college and career readiness. Academic rigor is a commitment that our Catholic schools embrace. The Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative does not compromise this commitment.

With the infusion of our Catholic identity, we are in control of the learning process within our schools; it is the *academic freedom* that we enjoy as nonpublic schools. We will determine what to adapt from the Common Core standard according to what best fits our unique mission. We will

never allow the faith and the education of our children to be comprised. Vigilance and adherence to the **Truth**, upon which our Church stands and upon which the mission of Catholic education resides, will always be our focus in the Diocese of Belleville, Archdiocese of Chicago, Diocese of Joliet, Diocese of Peoria, Diocese of Rockford, and Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Our schools will continue to be places of learning where our primary mission is to ensure our children have an authentic encounter with Jesus Christ.

We support the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative and would encourage our constituents to trust that we will remain true to the mission of Catholic education and to the formation of the children that God has entrusted to our care. Giving young people the tools of college and career readiness has long been a Catholic school tradition and commitment. We will continue to be centers of learning and communities of love.

Sincerely,



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