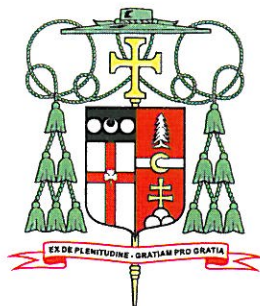


**DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**



(717) 657-4804
FAX (717) 657-1370
4800 Union Deposit Road
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17111-3710
Bishop'sOffice@hbgiocese.org
www.hbgiocese.org

September 15, 2014

Dear Frances,

Kindly permit me to acknowledge the receipt of your email regarding the Common Core Standards.

I hope from this letter that you may come to a better understanding as to why our Catholic schools have and are consulting the CCSS and how we are doing so.

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (April 2014), our "Catholic schools must take into consideration the horizon of the local, state, and national education landscape and the influence and application of the Common Core State Standards. To ignore this would place our students at a significant disadvantage for their post-secondary education, which is not an acceptable option for our families." For example, the SAT and ACT tests, as well as other standardized tests, will be based on the CCSS. This reality is one factor that must be taken into account when preparing our students for the future and in "guiding our students to academic success."

The Bishops further state that Catholic schools "have tried to integrate the best in education while leaving behind what is not appropriate to the Church's education mission." . Our schools are, therefore, considering the CCSS as one resource, an additional reference. We are making a selective use of the CCSS in the same way we have done in the past with other state standards in developing our own Catholic diocesan standards.

We are looking at the CCSS as a set of common, career-ready internationally benchmarked standards, as a set of academic expectations that all students should master by the end of each grade level, and we are looking at the kind of mathematics instruction where students learn to master a few topics each year before moving on to more advanced mathematics, concentrating on depth of knowledge and skill development rather than a fragmented system in which content is "a mile wide and an inch deep."

The great strength of our Catholic schools is that we control and direct our own curricula. We continue to have great latitude when it comes to standards, curriculum, textbooks, teaching methods and implementation. We can engage in the careful and limited use of the CCSS without government mandate, regulation or financial incentive; there are no mandates for us to follow any government rules. Our Catholic schools are committed to academic excellence rooted in our Catholic faith. The CCSS will not compromise our Catholic identity.

For decades, Catholic schools in this country have consulted state and national standards to develop academically rigorous curricula integrated with Catholic values, beliefs, teachings, and tradition. Our goal will always be to provide a challenging curriculum emphasizing the hallmarks of Catholic education – such as creativity, critical and analytical thinking, real-world application, and academic rigor. Our Catholic Schools remain fully committed to providing the best, most rigorous, most authentically Catholic education for our students. The Common Core Standards are a *reference*, not a *replacement* for Catholic School standards.

With a pledge of remembrance in my prayers and asking that you remember me in yours, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ Ronald W. Gainer'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer