

The Cure for the Common Core

By Leisa Schulz

“Catholic Schools Raise the Standards” was the 2013 Catholic Schools Week theme. This theme supports the recent launch of the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Elementary and Secondary Schools that ensure the effective operation and responsible governance for Catholic schools across the country, thus promoting high academic standards and Catholic identity. The logo designed for the week illustrates a chart of steady growth culminating in the highest achievement of all, a cross representing the faith that underscores all Catholic education.



In addition to adhering to the standards and expectations of church law, Catholic schools voluntarily operate under many additional sets of standards in the United States—accreditation associations, as well as federal, state, and local regulations.

The Common Core State Standards, developed by the nation’s governors and education commissioners, establishes a single set of educational standards for students in kindergarten through grade 12 in mathematics and English language arts. To date, the majority of states have voluntarily adopted these standards, which emphasize college and workforce readiness. Some of the notable shifts in mathematics with the common core standards include:

- Directing content and curriculum strongly where the standards focus.
- Coherence—think across grades and link to major topics within grades.
- Rigor—in major topics, pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application.

Some of the notable shifts in English-language arts with the common core standards include:

- Build knowledge through increased use of content-rich nonfiction.
- Use evidence cited from both literary and infor-

mational text to ground reading, writing, and speaking.

- Regular practice with complex text and its academic language.

The standards establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of students in their classrooms. Catholic schools across the country recognize the need to increase the rigor of academic programs continually. The common core standards complement that philosophy.

At the same time, however, the standards that inform Catholic education must also ensure that faith formation is integrated throughout Catholic schools’ curricula and programs.

The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), through the **Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative (CCCII)**, has developed and disseminated frameworks, guidelines, and resource guides that will assist local Catholic educators in infusing Catholic values, and principles of social teaching into all subjects and integrating the Catholic worldview and culture into curriculum and instructional design, using the common core standards.

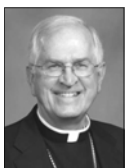
Maintaining Catholic Identity

The CCCII project is not about Catholic identity; it is about how we teach with Catholic identity. Catholic identity elements include a Catholic world view, culture and tradition, gospel values, Church social teachings, and moral/ethical dimensions.

The CCCII project strives to integrate these elements legitimately while ensuring the rigor demanded by the common core standards. As Catholic educators look at the common core standards, develop curriculum to meet those standards, and implement units as part of the curriculum, they will do so through the lens of Catholic identity.

The CCCII project is designed to provide Catholic school teachers with the tools and resources needed to give life to the common core standards within a Catholic school environment. More information about the CCCII

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The Catholic Conference of Kentucky was created in 1984 by the Roman Catholic bishops of Kentucky. Its mission is to represent the Church and the state's four Roman Catholic dioceses in public policy matters on both the state and federal level.

Bringing the Catholic Voice to the Public Square

By Rev. Patrick Delahanty



Because it is important that the Catholic voice be heard in Frankfort, the Conference sponsors Catholics @ the Capitol each year.

Education is a priority for the Conference and we are happy to feature John Elcesser as our keynote speaker in February 2014. He is the Executive Director of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association and an expert in matters of school choice. He will speak about the success Indiana has had in passing legislation to institute school vouchers.

Catholics @ the Capitol is not the only avenue available to Catholics who want to be faithful citizens and advocate that Gospel values be applied to public policy.

As an example for others, I asked Rick Blackwell, who teaches at Mercy Academy in Louisville, to write about their program that engages high school students in public policy advocacy based on Catholic teachings. Following is his response.

Young Catholics At The Capitol

Years ago when Mercy Academy created our service learning program we were fortunate to be lead by Lillian Kramer and Sr. Mary Schmuck who challenged us to create a program with a focus beyond direct service that addressed the need for systemic change and social action.

This can be a daunting task, but one way we take up this challenge each year is to partner with the Catholic Conference to do advocacy service.

For Mercy Academy, advocacy service means advocating for laws and policies that reflect Gospel values, the social teachings of the Church and the "Critical Concerns" of the Sisters of Mercy. Each year, especially when there is a long session in Frankfort, there are many opportunities to work on issues dealing with education, nonviolence and respecting life from womb to tomb.

Direct service can be safe and reward-

ing, while social action is often frustrating and controversial. However, it is only when we walk with both feet of service, direct action and social action, that the journey is rich and ultimately rewarding. Certainly issues such as the death penalty, restoring a felon's right to vote and informed consent can have political overtones complicating the approach. Additionally, there is the question of choosing issues and prioritizing those that will be addressed. That is precisely why the partnership with the Catholic Conference staff is so important. The research has already been done and, as much as possible, the issues are divorced from politics.

The Catholic Conference is not looking for Democratic or Republican solutions, but rather Gospel imperatives. The partnership should allay some of the concerns of your administrators, fellow teachers and parents about being accused of playing politics.

Make no mistake, this is powerful work, real-life education. The staff will treat your students as participants not observers. We have worked together to schedule appointments, gather information and the staff has helped our students work on additional bills that they found important.

Last session, one of our senior groups worked with legislators to file the Smarter Lunchroom Act that would make healthy choices easier in school cafeterias. They also testified before the House Education Committee. Later in the session, as our junior class traveled to Frankfort to lobby for several of the Catholic Conference bills, they also lobbied for the Smarter Lunchroom Act that our seniors had initiated. Ultimately, the bill passed the House only to die later in the Senate, but the real-life experience lives on for our students.

Over the years, our students have gained incredible insights and learned how difficult this work can be. On one occasion, as we were waiting in a conference room to visit our legislators, we used the time to write letters about voting rights to those we thought we might miss. A few minutes

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School Choice: Peace Through Justice

By Michael Monaghan

Handling the education desk at the Catholic Conference of Kentucky requires a decent amount of driving from one part of the state to another to meet with legislators, school heads, other education analysts and many who are inspired by a vision for a better education for our children. The meetings are worth it, but the driving is tedious.



Every so often I welcome the distraction of passing a car covered in bumper stickers. In case you are wondering, “Eat Bertha’s Mussels” refers to a seafood restaurant in Baltimore and according to Wikipedia, that message has been sighted in all continents with the exception of Antarctica!

Most of the time the bumper stickers relate to politics rather than to food. They range from remnants of political campaigns, symbols for causes, or political statements. One of the better ones proclaims, “If you want peace, work for justice.” My reaction is mixed. I am always encouraged that others find this statement compelling, but I also harbor the cynical thought, “Whose justice are these people willing to work for?”

Oftentimes, in the course of my work, people tell me about their deep respect for Catholic education. And then, sometimes, they follow that statement with a comment, “But I want them to stay away from public funds.”

I am surprised by that perspective for a couple of reasons. First, I wasn’t aware that Catholic schools had the ability to just reach out and pick up some public funds. And yet, there seems to be a lurking fear that this is exactly what they will do. Secondly, having worked in Catholic education for some time, I know that the only money ever available to those schools was the money parents paid us for teaching their children or that earned through various fundraising efforts.

Private Schools Support the Common Good

It may help those who see private schools as a threat to public resources to consider the following.

The money parents pay in tuition and that which is raised through various other means pays teachers’ sala-

ries, purchases school supplies, and covers the cost of operational expenses, e.g. utilities.

In other words, money passes through these private school operations and is returned to the government in the form of employment related taxes and other fees. State and federal governments then spend these dollars on public benefits.

Private schools benefit the taxpaying public in an even greater way than that described above. Every single child educated by the private schools saves the government money.

Private Schools Lower Everyone’s Taxes

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the per pupil expenditure for students in Kentucky in 2011 was \$9,091.

The Kentucky Private School Directory, found on the EducationBug website reports that there are 76,134 private school students in Kentucky.

Were these private school students to enroll in Kentucky’s public schools, the state would need to appropriate an additional \$1.4 billion to the education budget for the two-year budget cycle.

That’s right. Parents who choose private schools for their children, not only pay tuition, but they reduce the cost of public education by \$1.4 billion every two years. That means every taxpayer in Kentucky benefits each time a parent chooses to place children in private education settings.

Private school parents pay taxes to keep public schools open and reduce the amount Kentucky taxpayers would otherwise have to pay.

Now this presumes the state would continue to pay the \$9,091 per student; it presumes lawmakers would have the courage to find the extra \$1.4 billion needed to fund the public schools.

Even though the state benefits immensely every time a parent choose a private setting for a child’s education, the state balks at the idea of doing anything to help these parents, or other parents for whom the cost of private schools prevents their participation. Some would suggest that there is a moral debt owed to these parents. Maybe that is the connection that others are drawing between Catholic schools and public funds. Perhaps they saw that bumper sticker, “If you want peace, work for justice.”

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School Choice: Peace Through Justice

Continued from page 3.

That phrase draws my mind back some years ago to a classroom in a Catholic school in a rough neighborhood in Washington, D.C. I was teaching Social Studies to 20 students in the seventh grade.

Most of them were not Catholic but needed to be at a school more helpful than the public school up the street. There, only two weeks into the school year, a boy, friends with several of my students, was shot by the DC police.

He was also a seventh grader. The police said that he had a stolen bike. When they told him to get off of it, they said he drew a weapon and threatened them. So they shot him.

That was their story, proven false by the end of the academic year.

What Really Happened

The court found that the boy had come upon the officers at the wrong time. They decided he had to die. He grabbed a bike and rushed to get away as fast as he could, but publicly funded bullets were faster than that stranger's bike.

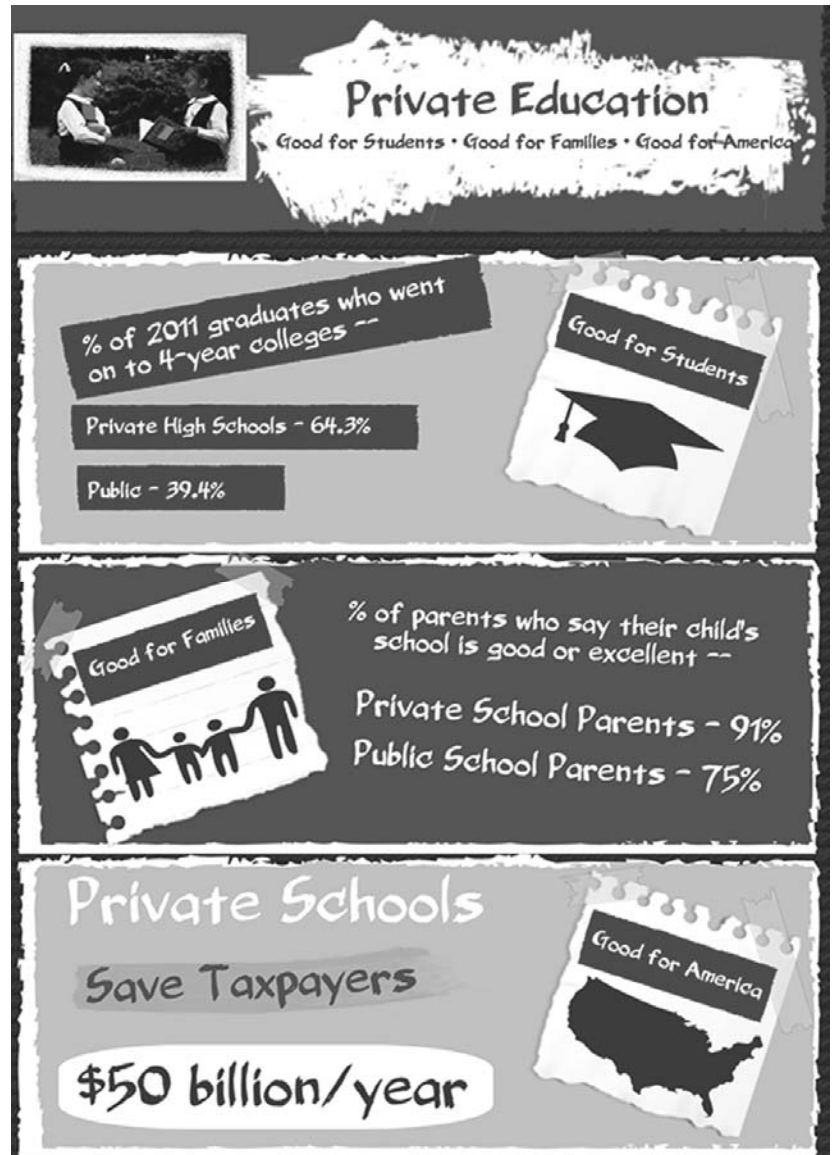
Judging from the way the neighborhood reacted, I believe that the family who left that bike in their front yard would have gladly lent it to the young man as he fled for his life. Even though the bike was "private."

This incident caused a spike of interest in our Catholic school. Others thought it might be a good idea to use us to get away from the lack of peace in their neighborhood.

There was no excuse for the young man's death. But there were causes. He was supposed to have been in his public school building that day attending classes, instead he was near it, outside, in a neighborhood where children were not allowed to play outside because of the danger.

The officers were supposed to be incorrupt and above suspicion, but they were overpowered by life's challenges and they had become part of a system where the lines between crime and government were so blurred that injustice was their work and peace was impossible.

But the day I remembered was some months after this terrible event. The trial was going on. We had dis-



A complete, color version of this infographic is available free from the Council for American Private Education (CAPE): <http://www.capanet.org/pdf/CAPEinfographicA4.pdf>.

cussed it briefly and delicately in class. I had not known the boy, but the story made me angry, so angry I could have cried. I found it hard to discuss it with the students when they wanted to talk about it. At this point in class we were practicing for a presentation for Black History Month where the seventh grade's part was to sing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." One girl rolled her eyes, left the choral group, sat down at the desk, and laid down her head.

"What's wrong?" I said.

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School Choice: Peace Through Justice

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“I am so tired of practicing this stupid song, why do we have to learn it? What good is a song?”

“That song freed the slaves, Angelica. People sang it so they would have courage going into battle and not be afraid to die. And because they died, people were freed.”

I had been dramatic because after all she was a seventh grader and she was not likely to listen anyways.

But she listened, her face changed and she went back and she sang. And she sang well. She had not known the relevance of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” And imprisoned inside of that small part of her natural childhood ignorance she was opting out and giving up. Much as her friend at the public school had opted out that fateful day.

It seems that no matter how hard teachers try, some students will get bored. Maybe that is why the young man died—he was bored and did not go into school that day. Maybe his teacher had quit trying. We don’t know.

We know this. Teaching is difficult and good teachers keep trying, not simply because of the mission entrusted to them, but because they know their work makes a difference to their students.

That work, done for the right reason, can mean that a young boy needing an education avoids being murdered because his overwhelmed system couldn’t find the time to track him down.

But no teacher has the chance to be there for these children if there is no school.

The Children Are the Reason

Angelica and I and the other students were safe inside the walls of Saint Thomas More Catholic School in Anacostia in Washington, D.C. The school always operated as a charity from the beginning with parish children attending in the early 1950’s for \$15.00 a year. But as the number of parishioners diminished, previously available funding drained away. And over 40 years costs increased considerably.

Finally in the 1990’s tuition and fees had come close to being unaffordable for the neighborhood in which the school was located.

A consulting firm reviewed the finances of the Archdiocese of Washington and recommended closing several schools and charities. Saint Thomas More was on the list.

The firm knew how to read the balance sheets. But it

failed to grasp what really counted. The pastor of the parish went before the priests’ council of the Archdiocese and before the Archbishop and he argued his case:

“This school is our school in the poorest ward of the city. These children need this education more than the children in the wealthier neighborhoods where schools are not in so desperate straits. It is our duty to provide for them because this type of work is the true reason that we are in education. They need us and we have to help them. It would be wrong to close the school. We aren’t Catholics if we do this.”

Father was right and everyone knew he was right. As a result, Saint Thomas More is still with us and to this day remains strapped for funds. Yet this continues as the safest school in the neighborhood. The work done there provides peace and protection to the children. Young minds grow there and students learn character and how to work for a more just society because they have learned to value peace.

And I tell you this, there is not anyone more motivated than these young men and women. They know the stakes and they will make a difference wherever they go.

And that brings us to the main reason that private schools have a moral claim on money which they have been saving the state.

The children, they are the reason.

Their parents need to be free to save children that are in danger. But, as long as the parents are not given economic freedom to pursue the best educational track for their child possible, be it public or private, there is no justice. When economic and legal force are used to prevent people from going where they want to go there is no justice, and no matter how quiet it seems inside a classroom, there is no peace.

As Dr. Vernard T. Gant, director of Urban School Services with the Association of Christian Schools International has written, “Children who are now bound to schools that are not working for them need to be set free to find and attend schools that do....”

“It’s time to set these children free. Let them pursue an education that will truly afford them the opportunity to dream and to realize the American dream.”

To that end the Catholic Conference of Kentucky promotes parents’ right to school choice.

The Cure for the Common Core

Continued from page 1.

project can be found at www.catholicstandards.org. Another important website for resources is www.cccii-online.org/.

The outcomes for the CCCII project include:

- Create/agree on the unit structure and build a template for use by teachers.
- Outline and narrate the process for developing school level and grade level units based on the common core standards and infused with Catholic identity elements.
- Identify 12 English language arts topics, themes, and concepts per grade level.
- Identify lots of resources to connect Catholic identity elements with each of the topics.
- Develop 103 exemplars—full infused units—for each grade level, using topics identified.

NCEA also sponsored a series of regional workshops across the United States in the summer of 2013 where teacher teams came together to become familiar with the process and to work together to create units for their schools.

NCEA recently offered a webinar for Catholic school

Leisa Schulz is Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Louisville.



educators entitled, “The Cure for the Common Core,” which acknowledged the challenges of implementing the common core standards and offered practical suggestions to teachers to begin implementation. In addition, the webinar identified the existing strengths and attributes of Catholic school cultures, which will contribute to their meeting and exceeding the standards. They are:

- God is the beginning and end of all human existence.
- Christ is the foundation of who we are and is at the heart of all we do and teach.
- Education is essentially a moral endeavor.
- Parents are the primary educators of their children.
- The subject of education is the student.
- Teaching is an intimate communication between souls.
- Decisions are best made locally.

Catholic schools raise the standards, and in the Catholic dioceses of Kentucky, our diverse communities of schools, each with its own unique history, spirit, and tradition, prepare our graduates to live their faith as maturing adults and provide Christian leadership for Church and society.

Bringing the Catholic Voice to the Public Square

Continued from page 2.

later, one of the Representatives spoke to us, asked our opinion and explained that he had never voted in favor of the bill that we were advocating. He went on to explain that he was personally opposed, and that he had not heard from any constituents on the issue. One of our juniors stood up, brought him the letter that she was working on and confidently asserted, “You are my representative, and now you have heard from a constituent.”

We were able to get him to vote with us for restoring voting rights that year. Though it did not ultimately pass, students were empowered by the success of their work.

On other occasions, they have been frustrated by the process. In one session, our students were crushed when

the bill they were working was stalled because someone had attached an amendment that had nothing to do with the original bill. Hopefully, their experiences will ultimately inspire them to work harder for change, rather than cause them to become cynical.

I encourage you to find ways to involve your students with the Catholic Conference this session. You might have teachers and administrators attend the Catholics at the Capitol event to get a better idea of how to involve your school. You might choose to have a pilot group work with the Catholic Conference to research the issues, possibly starting with a single class visit to Frankfort. However large or small your initial venture, I think you will be pleased with the results of the partnership.

Many Gifts, One Spirit Catholics @ the Capitol 2014

Join Catholics from across the state for **Many Gifts, One Spirit: Catholics @ The Capitol**, a 2-day legislative advocacy conference. Our Catholic faith calls us to be Faithful Citizens actively engaged in shaping a society that respects human life and seeks and promotes the Common Good.

**February 3 - 4, 2014 at the Capital Plaza Hotel
405 Wilkinson Boulevard, Frankfort, KY**

If staying overnight, call
Capital Plaza Hotel, 405 Wilkinson Blvd., Frankfort, KY at 502-227-5100
to reserve a room at the special rate of \$88.00 plus tax (1-4 Persons).
Be sure to mention "Catholics @ The Capitol" to receive this special rate.

Registration Fee: \$45.00 per person – includes materials, an evening banquet and a continental breakfast.
There is no financial aid available through the Catholic Conference of Kentucky.

Please mail completed forms along with the \$45.00 per person registration fee to:
Catholic Conference of Kentucky, 1042 Burlington Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601

PLEASE PRINT

First name _____ Last name _____ Title _____

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Parish _____ School _____ Agency _____

My KY State Representative is _____ My KY State Senator is _____

YOUR STATE SENATOR IS NOT MITCH McCONNELL NOR RAND PAUL

Additional or special needs you may have _____

I will attend the *Basic* Lobbying Session at 1:00 p.m. on February 3rd prior to the Conference that begins at 3:30 p.m. - YES ____ NO ____

- **I will attend Monday, February 3rd only** _____
- **I will attend Tuesday, February 4th only** _____
- **I will attend both dates** _____
- **I require vegetarian meals** _____

For questions about registration, please contact Karen Chambers at 502-875-4345, or e-mail her at kchambers@ccky.org.

Deadline for Registration for Catholics @ the Capitol is January 27, 2014



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Schedule: 2014 Catholics @ The Capitol

Monday, February 3, 2014

- 1:00 p.m. **Basic Lobbying Techniques Session** (*Kentucky Room*)
Jason D. Hall, Associate Director, Catholic Conference of Kentucky
Principles of communicating, dialogue and practical aspects of talking with legislators with role play and opportunity for questions.
- 2:30 p.m. **Registration** (Capital Plaza Hotel, 405 Wilkinson Blvd., Frankfort, KY)
- 3:30 p.m. **Many Gifts, One Spirit Opening Prayer**
- 3:35 p.m. **Welcome** – *Rev. Patrick Delahanty*
Executive Director, Catholic Conference of Kentucky
- 3:40 p.m. **Issues you are discussing with your legislators on Tuesday.**
(15 to 25 minutes for each issue)
- 5:00 p.m. **Summary of Legislative Issues**
- 5:45 p.m. **Break**
- 6:00 p.m. **Eucharistic Celebration**
Principal Celebrant: Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville
Homilist: Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer, Bishop of Lexington
- 7:00 p.m. **Dinner** (*provided*)
- 7:45 p.m. **Mr. John Elcesser**, *Executive Director, Indiana Non-Public Education Association*
School Choice, The Indiana Story: Making it Happen in Kentucky
- 8:45 p.m. **Closing Remarks** – *Rev. Patrick Delahanty*
Executive Director, Catholic Conference of Kentucky

Tuesday, February 4, 2014

- 8:00 a.m. **Breakfast** (*provided*)
- 8:15 a.m. **During Breakfast:**
Driving Directions to Capitol
Questions/ Further Discussion – *Rev. Patrick Delahanty*
Executive Director, Catholic Conference of Kentucky
- 9:00 a.m. **Travel to Capitol: Meetings with your Senator/Representative**
- 12:00 p.m. **Lunch** (*on your own*) **in Capitol Annex Cafeteria**
- 2:00 p.m. **House and Senate Convene @ Capitol** (*Attendance Optional*)