

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

P.O. Box 23825 • Green Bay, WI 54305-3825 • 920-272-8194 • FAX 920-435-1330

April 14, 2015

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ:

In the last year, through the leadership of our Diocesan Education Department, a great deal of time has been devoted to the analysis of our Catholic education standards and benchmarks. This great effort has enabled us to insure we provide the very best in terms of excellence both academically and faith-based to our students. I am writing this letter today with great confidence in the Diocese of Green Bay as it continues to maintain its long-standing commitment to excellence in Catholic Education for our children.

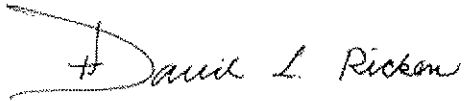
Our current standards were used as the foundation in our analysis along with a very careful review of the Common Core Standards while maintaining and preserving our Catholic teachings and traditions. These standards and benchmarks, which are based on our commitment to excellence, are not new to the Diocese of Green Bay. Many resources, including current state standards, standards of national organizations and other dioceses have all been considered in the development of those standards. It is the Green Bay Diocesan Education Department, in consultation with our teachers and interested parents who have worked together to develop these standards and benchmarks for our Catholic schools.

This process was carefully overseen by the Catholic School Advisory Council with final review and approval by me, as Bishop of Green Bay. The result of this review has formed and maintained a rigorous set of standards and benchmarks which integrates with our Catholic faith providing an academic curriculum of excellence that enables our students to achieve success as a citizen in both faith and career.

I am grateful for the good work and dedication of our educational leadership and am pleased with the results that have been attained through this analysis. Our Catholic schools will continue to stimulate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, by providing a balanced curriculum that integrates Catholic culture, instills the value of service, teaches the respect for all persons, and emphasizes moral development and self-discipline. It is our children's success that is then realized through the vital partnership between our Catholic schools and its parents as we work together in the faith formation of our children.

May God continue to bless the preservation and excellence of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Green Bay, as I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David L. Ricken". The first letter 'D' is significantly larger and more stylized than the rest of the text.

The Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL
Bishop of Green Bay



K-8 Curriculum / Standards and Benchmarks

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is curriculum?

Curriculum in the Green Bay Diocesan Catholic schools is the overall program of teaching/learning that educates the whole child in faith and academics. Balanced curriculum consists of a school philosophy (classical, child-centered, project, etc.), developmental framework of academic concepts (standards and benchmarks), assessments, textbooks and resources, and Catholic culture (the way we pray, act, integrate the Catholic teachings and traditions into content, and make decisions). Key to curriculum is the spiritual and academic formation of our principals and teachers.

What are standards and benchmarks?

The Diocese of Green Bay has its own standards and benchmarks. Standards and benchmarks are a set of clear and measurable learning goals for grades K-8. The standards place emphasis on knowledge, skills, and understandings (i.e., know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in spelling and decoding words) for each grade and developmental level (i.e., fourth grade) with a focus on developing critical and analytical thinking with application to the real world. It is important to note that standards are not curricula but one component of curriculum.

How are standards and benchmarks reviewed and revised?

Review/revision of standards and benchmarks is a continual process. Administrators, teachers and interested parents are invited to review and revise the standards and benchmarks. Using our data from the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments, currently published standards by national academic disciplines, and standards of other dioceses, teachers and interested parents review and revise the diocesan standards. All teachers have an opportunity to respond to the proposed standards and benchmarks to ensure a continued quality framework for academic excellence.

A member of the Diocesan Education Department serves on all Standards and Benchmarks committee work. When final drafts are completed by the committees, the documents are vetted by ecclesial authorities for any concerns with Catholic teaching and traditions. The diocesan Education Department members have regular communication with the Bishop and Catholic School Advisory Council on standards and benchmarks development. The Bishop approves the final draft of the standards. After final approval, the standards and benchmarks are published as the learning goals for all students in the diocesan schools.

Due to the Wisconsin adoption of Common Core, the diocesan Communication Arts (English and Language Arts) standards were most recently reviewed, revised, and published in 2014. In our strategic plan for Catholic

Schools, Guidance and Math standards revisions will be completed in 2015. Science and Social reviews are targeted for 2016. World Languages will be reviewed in 2017. Physical Education and Health review/revisions are scheduled for 2018.

What and how do we teach in our Catholic schools?

Our schools are Jesus-centered and focused on the individual. The diocesan standards and benchmarks provide a framework for teachers to know what students should know and be able to do at the end of the year. The leaders and teachers in our Catholic schools decide how to successfully select and implement the instructional techniques, resources, technology, and materials to best support the students in their learning environment. Integration of Catholic teaching, traditions, Catholic Social Teachings, and scripture as content and daily examples provide the uniqueness of Catholic education. The teachers create the best opportunities for learning based on the children in their classroom.

How are students in our Catholic Schools assessed?

The K-8 schools in the Diocese of Green Bay use the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) as their benchmark assessment. The MAP assessment is both formative and summative. Teachers use the data to inform teaching for individual students and research patterns for overall program revisions. Schools may test in fall, winter and spring or any combination of times and levels that best suits their students' needs.

What textbooks will the students in our Catholic schools use?

Textbooks are resources for teaching the Green Bay Diocesan Standards. Materials, resources, books, and technology are tools the teachers use to create a rigorous curriculum that address the diocesan standards. Teachers integrate Catholic teachings, morals, and traditions into the daily lessons.

How are textbooks selected?

Textbooks are reviewed as part of the standards review/revision of a particular discipline area. The resources, including textbooks are reviewed by the teachers with input from the diocesan team of Catholic schools. When books are vetted by the diocesan Catholic schools team to be consistent with the diocesan standards they are placed on a recommended list for schools to choose when replacing teaching materials.

Common Core Quick Points

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a coherent progression of learning expectations in English Language Arts and Math designed to prepare K-12 students for college and career success. Wisconsin has adopted the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Math for its public schools.

Did the Diocese of Green Bay adopt the Common Core State Standards?

No. The diocese uses its own academic standards. Since Common Core State Standards and the Green Bay Diocesan Standards are statements of knowledge, skills, and understandings that students should be able to demonstrate at appropriate levels, there will be similarities in both. The diocesan standards continue to maintain educational best practices and integrate Catholic teaching and traditions to form disciples of Jesus and hold students to consistently high standards. A hallmark of diocesan Catholic schools is the goal to

prepare students to exceed standards within a Catholic culture. A consistent review cycle of our diocesan standards using our existing standards, standards of national professional organizations and other state and diocesan standards will ensure the diocesan standards continue to address the spiritual and academic education of our students. The review cycle of the diocesan standards is a part of our Catholic Schools Strategic Plan monitored by the Education Department and Catholic Schools Advisory Council.

Will the schools in the Diocese of Green Bay use textbooks or materials labeled “aligned with” or “enhanced to” Common Core Standards in Math and English Language Arts?

Possibly. The textbooks and materials selected by our schools to teach the diocesan standards might contain the words “common core” on them. Our school educators chose textbooks and resources to teach the diocesan standards. Our teachers are not using the Common Core Standards as their framework for choosing what and how to teach. They are using the diocesan standards. The uniquely Catholic and rigorous curriculum is created by the teachers utilizing the diocesan standards as a basis. Textbooks and materials support the teachers in helping students meet the diocesan standards. Catholic teachings, Scripture, morals, textbooks and resources support them in creating the curriculum and lessons taught. Major educational resource and textbook publishers correlate their materials with the Common Core standards and label the materials “common core” as part of their marketing strategies.