

Should Lutheran Schools Consider Adopting the Common Core State Standards?

Prepared by LCMS School Ministry
June 21, 2013

Background

1. Lutheran schools have a rich heritage and long standing commitment to academic excellence that is rooted in the Christ-centered mission that flows from the Lutheran Confessions. The Common Core State Standards may serve as a tool that enhances curriculum development. They could provide additional guidelines upon which the rigorous programs of study for our students could be designed. The rigor is not the product of the CCSS standards alone; rather, is connected with the instructional process provided by Lutheran educators
2. The Common Core State Standards suggest a set of high-quality academic expectations that all students should master by the end of each grade level. They propose consistent grade-level learning goals for all students and inform parents about learning outcomes, thereby making it easier for parents to collaborate with teachers in helping their children achieve success.
3. The Common Core State Standards are not a curriculum. A curriculum includes what, when and how subjects are taught and what materials to use. These matters are not dictated by the Common Core State Standards. For Lutheran schools, these elements will continue to be determined by individual schools, working to meet the needs of their students.
4. The Common Core State Standards represent a fundamental shift in the teaching and learning process. They establish clear, measurable goals for students that assist teachers in making instructional decisions. They place emphasis on creativity, critical and analytical thinking and application to curriculum content. They may serve to assist our schools in guiding the way that instruction takes place in each classroom while allowing the school to develop its own unique curriculum content.

1. Although there has been strong business and educational support for the Common Core State Standards in almost every state that has adopted them, there has been a recent move by some to discredit the standards.
2. The Association of Christian Schools International (ASCI), Christian Schools International (CSI) and The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) support the move toward the Common Core State Standards. The reason? – Its focus on rigor, relevance, best practices, and college and career readiness.

Any movement toward the integration of the standards with Lutheran school curriculum should proceed after careful consideration of two factors:

1. Lutheran schools are empowered to design and direct the integration of the Common Core State Standards within curriculum that ensures the highest quality of academic preparation for students.
2. Lutheran schools must be committed to infuse the Common Core State Standards with the faith, principles and values that are inherent in the unique mission and identity they possess.

Summary

An excellent Lutheran school provides a rigorous academic curriculum that integrates the Christian faith and knowledge. As trained professionals, Lutheran school administrators and teachers continually seek the best instructional methods for educating students. Lutheran schools traditionally have developed their own standards or adapted state standards for use with their own curriculum. Some will continue to do this.

Ultimately, Lutheran schools will determine independently which standards to follow. The process of that discovery must remain true to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's (LCMS) Christ-centered mission: to provide a solid, Christian education developed with standards that drive instruction so that every child can be reached with an effective education – one that centers on the LCMS faith. The Common Core State Standards may be considered a tool that would allow LCMS schools to more fully prepare its students for service and witness to Christ and the world.