



June 16, 2014

Archbishop Jerome E. Listecki
Archbishop of Milwaukee
3501 South Lake Drive
PO Box 070912
Milwaukee Wisconsin 53207-0912

Dear Archbishop Listecki:

Thank you for your letter regarding the petition from over 1,000 parents of children attending Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee concerned about the Common Core Curriculum.

We are certainly not trying to insult anyone, as your letter suggests. We are simply parents in your diocese taking an active interest in what is being taught to our children in the classroom. We care deeply about our schools and the Archdiocese. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2223) states that "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children." In his 1994 Letter to Families, St. John Paul II wrote, "Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area; they are educators, because they are parents." (16). As Catholic parents, in accordance with these Church directives, major educational changes in the diocese should be subject to an open and public discussion prior to approval and implementation.

You state that the Common Core Standards are neither "adopted" nor "adapted" and that they "do not have any impact on curriculum or content whatsoever." However, the Archdiocese itself states on its website: "The Archdiocese of Milwaukee is in the process of aligning our existing curriculum with the learning goals outlined in the Common Core State Standards. The new curriculum for Mathematics will be implemented in fall, 2013 and English Language Arts will be implemented in fall, 2014." (Attachment 1) (emphasis added). We were given documents from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee labeled "Key Instruction Shifts of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics" and "Grade 3 Changes: Archmil to CCSS-M." (Attachment 2). Logically, the point of standards is to drive curriculum. Further, the Catholic schools in your diocese have introduced new conceptual math, and there is a definite impact on curriculum as the math textbooks themselves are clearly marked "Common Core." (Attachment 3). The Common Core Standards unquestionably have an impact on curriculum and content.

Your letter states: "to think that parents are more qualified than our academic experts to select said curriculum is ridiculous." The academic experts in many other dioceses have decided not to implement Common Core. In October, over 130 Catholic academic experts signed a letter urging all bishops to reject the Common Core. (Attachment 4). See also the statements of national academic experts Dr. James Milgram and Sandra Stotsky (Attachment 5), along with their credentials, who strongly disagree

with you and yours. As the Secretariat of Catholic Education at the USCCB stated: “The diocesan bishop has the right and duty of oversight and visitation for Catholic schools with the support and assistance of the Catholic community.” (Attachment 6) (See also “in consultation with the diocesan bishop, pastors, teachers, and parents...”). We are not trying to take the place of your academic experts: we are asking to be heard.

Your letter states: “Quite frankly, I am at a loss as to what more I can say about this topic.” You could follow the words of Bishop Ricken in the Green Bay diocese who said: “It is my directive that the schools of the diocese utilize the diocesan standards previously in place and not substitute for them the ‘common core standards.’” (Attachment 7). As Bishop Ricken noted:

The verdict is still very much out on the ‘common core standards.’ All of the subject area standards have not yet been developed, let alone proved to be successful over time. There is no track record or existing data to help us determine if these standards will actually improve our students’ performance. My position and my direction for the diocese is to first see how the standards actually work in public schools and, if their performance exceeds ours, we will then take another look.

(emphasis added). As the Secretariat of Catholic Education stated: “Our schools have resisted the need to adopt educational trends while addressing the ever changing need of children in education.” (Attachment 6).

We are asking that you instruct your diocese to resist the need to adopt this educational trend. First, see how the standards actually work in public schools. If their performance exceeds ours, then you can take another look.

The Secretariat notes that “The Committee encourages a rigorous discussion at the local level that reinforces a solid understanding of the philosophy and mission of Catholic schools with a clear rationale for the standards and guidelines implemented by the diocese.” Let us have this discussion.

We have no interest in “creating division on the front page of our local newspaper.” Your office would not meet with us and the Superintendent has put us off and now canceled our planned meeting. We are parents in the Archdiocese who are asking to be heard. Over 1,000 of your parishioners have learned about Common Core and have now formally petitioned you to end it. Please heed their call.

Respectfully,

*/Steve Becker/
/Abby Figi/*

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Abby Figi

Pope Francis: “At the same time, this implies supporting the right of parents to decide the moral and religious education of their children. And in this regard I would like to express my rejection of any kind of educational experimentation with children. We cannot experiment with children and young people.” (Attachment 8) (emphasis added).

Bill Gates: “It would be great if our education stuff worked, but that we won’t know for probably a decade.” (Attachment 9) (emphasis added).