

## Common Core ‘lite’: coming soon to a Catholic school near you

### Unit Item: Catholic Identity ...

#### Example:

#### Human Rights (rights of children)

*The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met....How does affirmation or violation of the human rights of children effect character development in Go Ask Alice...?*

– Excerpts from Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative: Unit Design Guidelines

*Last night was the worst night of my sh—ty, rotten, stinky, dreary, f—ked-up life...*

*Jan passed me in the hall today... “I’ll get even with you, you f---ing Miss Polly Pure,” she said and she practically screamed it out in front of everyone...*

*He pushed his tongue into my mouth and he just kept rolling it around until I was crying and gagging. Then he said all I needed was a good f—k...*

*Another day, another b—w job. If I don’t give Big Ass a b—w, he’ll cut off my supply. G—damn Big Ass makes me do it before he gives me the load.*

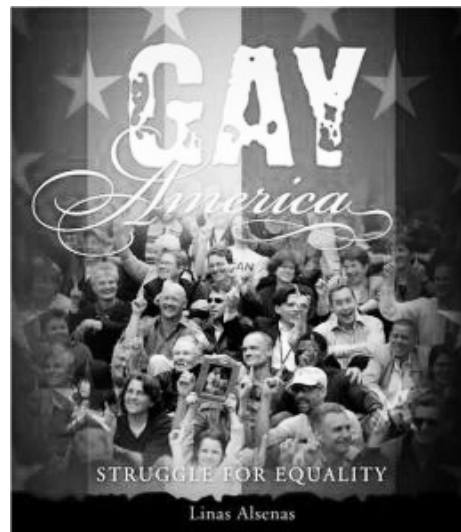
– Excerpts from Go Ask Alice (Obscenities edited.)

The Common Core State Standards initiative, begun in 2007, is a set of national education standards adopted by 44 states and the District of Columbia, whose purported aim is to standardize educational expectations across state lines to assure that students are college- and workplace-ready in a global

economy.

Critics, however, say that Common Core actually “dumbs down” the students. They charge that it uses Marxist behavioral techniques to inculcate students with collectivist, atheistic ideology and annihilates individual rights.

The Common Core standards were developed by two Washington, D.C.-based trade organizations, the Council of Chief State



***Gay America: Struggle for Equality, an optional text for fourth graders, depicts homosexual behavior as a positive good, in prurient detail.***

School Officers and the National Governors Association, through their contractor, Achieve, Inc.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has also generously funded population control and pro-abortion organizations, has reportedly spent \$150 million to fund and promote Common Core.

Common Core was developed by committees in closed meetings, without public debate.

Neither Congress nor state leg-

islators, which are supposed to represent the public, were involved in the decision to adopt them

One of the standardized-test creators was Linda Darling Hammond, President Obama’s top choice for education secretary, but never nominated because of her leftist leanings and close association with former domestic terrorist-turned educator Bill Ayers.

State governors or state boards of education, enticed by huge federal Race to the Top grants in 2009, signed on to Common Core before they had even seen the standards.

Such funding by the Obama administration, opponents contend, appears to violate federal laws that explicitly forbid the Education Department to influence curriculum.

It is a federal power grab over their children’s education, they say; once a state adopts Common Core, its curriculum goals and assessments are effectively nationalized. They charge that the Obama administration’s aim is to remove local authority over classroom content and shift it to centralized bureaucracies, much as it has done with the U.S. economy and health care.

On its website, Marylandpublicschools.org, the Maryland State Department of Education boasts, “Maryland was one of the first States in the nation to adopt the Common Core State Standards in reading/English language arts and mathematics.

“The State Board of Education adopted the standards by unanimous vote in June 2010.”

Common Core State Standards “form the foundation for Maryland’s new State curriculum [which]

will be implemented in all schools in the 2013-2014 school year,” reports the website.

### Stotsky begs to differ

Proponents of Common Core claim that its “rigorous” curriculum standards focus on 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills like problem-solving, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity that are vital to success in college and today’s workplace.

But critics like Sandra Stotsky charge that the standards were neither internationally benchmarked nor research-based, and that they will have a “devastating impact on literary study and analytical thinking.”

Stotsky is a retired Professor of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas who was formerly in charge of Massachusetts’ widely praised English Language Arts standards.

As a member of the Common Core Validation Committee, she refused to approve the Common Core ELA standards.

Stotsky points out that Common Core requires that informational or nonfiction reading must make up 50 percent of classroom reading.

“A diminished emphasis on literature in the secondary grades makes it unlikely that American students will study a meaningful range of culturally and historically significant literary works before graduation,” writes Stotsky.

“It also prevents students from acquiring a rich understanding and use of the English language... Indeed, it is more than likely that college readiness will decrease when secondary English teachers begin to reduce the study of complex literary texts...”

Classic literary texts, with their structure, character development, rich vocabulary and figurative language, help students to develop analytical thinking, she maintains.

**A power point presentation on the Archdiocese of Baltimore website outlines steps to implement the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative in the Archdiocese’s schools. Right: slides from the presentation.**

## Laying the Foundation... What Have We Done

- Principal Professional Development  
Common Core 101, February 7
- Assistant Principals Professional Development  
Common Core 101, March 19
- Curriculum Leadership Team Professional Development
- MSDE Common Core Academy, March 21
- Curriculum Writers Professional Development  
Common Core Mathematics, March 22, May 2 and May 15

Continuing our journey...



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## Laying the Foundation

### Curriculum Mapping - [archbalt.rubiconatlas.org](http://archbalt.rubiconatlas.org)

- Rubicon Atlas WebEx, April 17, 2013
- Rubicon Atlas Webinars by May 1

### Curriculum revision will begin summer of 2013 in Common Core Mathematics

- Maryland State Department of Education Framework
  - Content
  - Skills
  - Essential questions



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## Launching the Process

- Principal-led presentation with standards to lay foundation (before June 7th)
- AOB webinar series (summer 2013)
- Principal-led presentation for entire faculty (August 2013)
- New Math essential maps released (August 2013)
- AOB Professional Development (January 2 and 3, 2014)
- AOB guided in service (January 2)
- Collaborative directed PD based on needs; teacher break out sessions to share instructional strategies (January 3)
- Spring 2014-Collaborative PD day
- Attend conferences, participate in webinars
- Plan for Title IIA funds
- Parent informational video developed by August 2013



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One set of examples for “informational” texts offered to meet the Common Core requirements lists reading selections on computer geeks, fast food, teenage marketing, and the working poor.

“This is hardly the kind of material to exhibit ambiguity, subtlety, and irony,” notes Stotsky.

James Milgram, a Stanford University emeritus math professor and the only professional mathematician on the Common Core Validation Committee, also declined to sign off on the Common Core standards.

“The Common Core standards claim to be ‘benchmarked against international standards,’ but this phrase is meaningless,” said Milgram.

“[The math standards] are actually two or more years behind international expectations by eighth grade, and only fall further behind as they talk about grades 8-12.

“Indeed they don’t even fully cover the material in a solid geometry course, or in a second-year algebra course.”

### **Catholic schools ‘get on board’**

In a May 31, 2013, “position statement,” the National Catholic Education Association announced that it and other “partners in Catholic education” have established the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative (CCCII).

“CCCII provides resources to design and direct the implementation of Common Core within the culture and context of a Catholic school curriculum,” explains NCEA.

“Thus, Catholic schools can infuse the standards with the faith, principles, values and social justice themes inherent in the mission of a

Catholic school.”

Backers of CCCII insist that it is not a curriculum and will be in line with the Church’s teachings.

“This is simply untrue,” Ann Hynd, founder of Pittsburgh Catholics Against Common Core, told *Defend Life*.

“This initiative seeks to promote Common Core to Catholic educators and hand them tools, guides, and resources developed by them so that teachers can impart some Catholic themes and layer on Catholic concepts, all the while, following the methods and techniques that are essential to Common Core.”

Classroom templates published on the CCCII website feature nu-

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## **‘By accepting Common Core, they are aligning with the very groups that are distorting Church teachings.’**

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merous books and websites that directly contradict moral teaching.

For example, books included in the CCCII Exemplar Unit templates promote the homosexual agenda.

The first grade reading list includes *Who’s in a Family* by Robert Skutch and *The Family Book*, by Todd Parr, both of which inform first graders that some families have two mommies or two daddies.

*Gay America: Struggle for Equality*, by Linas Alsenas, an optional text for fourth graders, presents LGBT history in the U.S., painting homosexual behavior as “normal” and a positive good. It does so in lurid detail.

A fourth grade exemplar teaching unit, “Making Waves,” advo-

cates an extreme left-wing version of Catholic social teaching and social justice, Hynds observes. It focuses on training fourth graders to be radical activists and “community organizers.”

*Kids Guide to Social Action* by Barbara Lewis, a book recommended for teachers as a resource for social justice teaching, coaches children to rebel and defy family values in order to assert kids’ rights.

The book includes statements such as, “Are you tired of adults making most of the big decisions in your life?” and “Now, some adults might disagree and say that your parents represent you.”

“In Pittsburgh, we know that they are rewriting their curriculum to align with Common Core standards,” says Hynds.

Superintendents and principals tell objecting parents that they wouldn’t use any of the objectionable books on the recommended reading lists.

Hynds states, “By accepting Common Core, they are purposefully choosing to align with the very groups and people that are distorting Church teachings and who think these materials are acceptable for our children.”

“Parents are just being tolerated; we’re being shut out of the whole process,” she concludes.

### **Two Catholic moms on warpath**

In September 2011, two Indiana moms, Heather Crossin and Erin Tuttle, shocked that math and English standards were actually being lowered in their kids’ Catholic schools, began a battle against what they learned was the cause: Common Core standards and testing.

Horrified by what they learned about Common Core, they began

an 18-month knock-down, drag-out fight that culminated in the passage of a bill in May suspending the implementation of Common Core in the state of Indiana.

Opposition to the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative is picking up steam in dioceses across the country.

CCCII supporters say that over 100 dioceses have adopted the initiative.

But Common Core opponents are finding it hard going even to learn whether their diocesan schools have adopted CCCII, much less any details about its implementation, says Hynds.

When *Defend Life* asked Kathy Mears, NCEA's executive director of the Elementary Schools Department, whether the dioceses of Baltimore, Washington, Wilmington and Arlington were implementing CCCII, Mears emailed back, "I don't know if those particular dioceses are adapting any of the standards. I am sorry I cannot be of more help."

A search for "Catholic Common Core Identity Initiative" on the Archdiocese of Baltimore website, archbalt.org, however, gives strong evidence that the Archdiocese is in an ongoing process of implementing CCCII.

One website page, "Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Common Core State Standards," offers multiple web links and other resources, from "NCEA Position Statement on Common Core" to "Achieve the Core: Tools and Resources for Implementation," which offers teachers sample Common Core lessons.

A Microsoft power point presentation, "How do we prepare our educators to implement Common Core into their instruction?" outlines concrete steps that have been

and will be taken to implement Common Core and CCCII in the Baltimore Archdiocese schools.

Attempts by *Defend Life* to learn at what stage the Archdiocese's schools are in the implementation process, however, have been unsuccessful.

Email and phone message inquiries to Margaret Dammeyer, associate superintendent of Curriculum and Development, and to three other involved Archdiocesan school administrators have not been answered.

Emmett McGroarty and Jane Robbins write in "Saving the Uncommon Core of Catholic Education," (*Crisis* magazine, May 17,

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2013), "[I]t is simply not possible to reconcile true Catholic Education with Common Core."

They quote what Dr. Anthony Esolen, an English professor at Providence College and contributor to *Magnificat*, has to say about Common Core:

"[W]hat appalls me most about the standards...is the cavalier contempt for great works of human art and thought, in literary form. It is a sheer ignorance of the life of the imagination.

"We are not programming machines. We are teaching children. We are not producing functionaries, factory-like. We are to be forming the hearts of men and women....

"Do not train them to become

apparatchiks in a vast political and economic system, but raise them to be human beings, honoring what is good and right, cherishing what is beautiful, and pledging themselves to their families, their communities, their churches, and their country."

*Editor's note: The Common Core Catholic Identity website (at catholicstandards.org) has been shut down.*

*However, much of the material on the closed website, including CCCII exemplar units and guidelines, is still available on Pittsburgh Catholics against Common Core's website, pghcatholicagainstcommoncore.com, under "Source Documents."*



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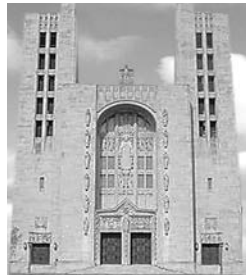
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