

# OUR CATHOLIC MISSION

TRUTH AND FIDELITY IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

SUMMER 2021

**A CATHOLIC  
APPROACH  
TO K-12  
CURRICULUM  
STANDARDS**

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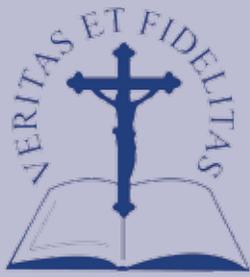
English,  
History,  
Science,  
Math,  
Theology

**ARE SECULAR PROGRAMS OK  
FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION?**

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**CRITICAL RACE THEORY  
AND THE CANCEL CULTURE**





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THE CARDINAL NEWMAN SOCIETY  
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(703) 367-0333

## SUMMER 2021 ISSUE

# In this Issue

With summer in full swing, families and educators are already thinking of the next school year and the opportunities and challenges Catholic education will face. One of the areas that deserves a fresh look is K-12 curriculum.

As the culture continues to shift and coarsen and decades-old norms and beliefs are washed away with the tide of the latest fads, it is a good time to take a look at the curricular content of Catholic schools and homeschool programs to make sure that everything we do is “in the world, but not of it,” so to speak. In other words, the divinely inspired mission of Catholic education can only succeed if it is built on a strong foundation with our Faith, the Church, and ultimately Jesus Christ at its core.

There are strong temptations, however, for overworked administrators lacking the resources of public schools to include secular standards or programs in Catholic schools. This is understandable but potentially dangerous. On the surface, these secular standards and add-ons to curriculum often appear benign or neutral—and may have received high marks by secular educators—but more often than not, they tend to weaken the Catholic identity of a school and dilute the Catholic content expected by the Church and parents.

In this issue of *Our Catholic Mission*, Kelly Salomon takes a look at how the Newman Society’s faithful Catholic Curriculum Standards have helped Catholic educators integrate Catholic identity across key content areas (see page 4). These standards were developed as a corrective to the secular Common Core State Standards and have already been adopted or adapted by at least 28 dioceses educating and forming more than 275,000 children.

The Common Core is a great example of a secular program that is insufficient to serve the mission of Catholic education. On page 8, Newman Society president Patrick Reilly introduces the Society’s recommended framework for evaluating secular programs, *Policy Standards for Secular Materials and Programs in Catholic Education*, and summarizes how the Common Core, Habits of Mind program, and popular IB program should or should not be adopted by Catholic schools.

Finally, on the facing page, this issue’s editorial takes a look at the highly controversial Critical Race Theory, which seems to be gaining momentum by the day. Catholic educators can and should be teaching about race and human dignity, but CRT is ideological and divisive and not appropriate to Catholic education.

By standing firm in its commitment to Catholic identity in all areas of the curriculum, Catholic education remains faithful to its divinely inspired mission, provides families with the excellent formation and education they need and deserve, and is a witness for the Truth.

**OCM**

If you have any questions or comments or would like digital copies of *Our Catholic Mission* to share with your staff and others in Catholic education, please visit [NewmanSociety.org/OCM](http://NewmanSociety.org/OCM) or email [Programs@CardinalNewmanSociety.org](mailto:Programs@CardinalNewmanSociety.org)

# On Racism and Cancel Culture

**A**mid high racial, social and political tensions in America today, Catholic parents and educators are eager to teach students about race, gender, justice and human dignity. That's a good thing.

But adopting divisive and ideologically driven innovations like “critical race theory,” “woke-ism,” “gender ideology” and the “cancel culture” is not the way of faithful Catholic education.

The Newman Society has studied these topics and published new guidance at our website to help educators confront sins of racism, unjust discrimination and bullying while rejecting dangerous ideologies. Instead of adopting new and popular approaches to difficult topics, Catholic educators should rely on faithfully Catholic materials including the clear instruction in Vatican documents, U.S. bishops' pastoral letters and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

## Critical race theory

“Critical race theory (CRT) asserts that America's legal framework is inherently racist and that race itself, instead of being biologically grounded and natural, is a socially constructed concept that is used by white people to further their economic and political interests at the expense of people of color,” explains Dr. Denise Donohue, the Newman Society's vice president for educator resources, in her recent Catholic World Report article that summarizes a more substantial backgrounder on critical race theory published at the Newman Society website.

CRT rests on a view of society as oppressors and oppressed, with emphasis on imbalances of power instead of the

inherent dignity of each individual and the complexities of a pluralistic society. Donohue's backgrounder explains the development of CRT from “critical theory” and its foundation in Marxism, which the Church has rejected as a dangerous political ideology. CRT's introduction in the classroom therefore manipulates education for political ends. The theory calls for dismantling and rebuilding American legal and social structures, and its critique of Western society sometimes charges the Church and Christian notions of God, marriage and gender as inherently racist.

“Students taught with critical race theory materials can become racists in the literal sense of the word: they may treat others (the perceived oppressor race) unfairly because of skin color or background,” Donohue warns. “Division into categories of good and bad based on skin color is a reversal of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and antithetical to a Catholic understanding of human dignity and equality.”

## Cancel culture

Another concern is the “cancel culture,” which hastily labels even the most rational and sympathetic commentary on topics like gender and race as either “bigoted” or “leftist,” often with severe social consequences. In an increasingly secular society, Catholics are especially at risk of unfair judgment—even among fellow Catholics.

Catholic education must not fall into this trap.

“Authentic Catholic education does not cancel culture; it elevates, redeems and transmits culture,” writes senior fellow Dr. Dan Guernsey at The Catholic

Thing. “It seeks out and celebrates truth, beauty and goodness, wherever they are found—and if they are missing, Catholic education points that out as well.”

Guernsey's helpful list of things that Catholic educators can do to counter ideology and division (see the full list at [TheCatholicThing.org](http://TheCatholicThing.org)) include:

- Relate discussions to a Catholic understanding of the human person through a clear and convincing Christian anthropology, which affirms our creation by God as male or female and the union of our bodies and spirits, as well as our common humanity and destiny.
- Teach students to analyze the morality of human acts (including separating the sin and the sinner), properly attribute degrees of culpability based on individual awareness and freedom, ascribe sin (in the proper sense) to individuals not groups, and affirm the possibility of repentance and forgiveness.
- Help students discover the religious dimension in human history and compare the actions of peoples according to Catholic morality and virtues, but also according to the level of development of a person or culture and the impact of surrounding conditions, knowledge, and understanding of the time.

Bottom line: Catholic educators already teach authentic Catholic moral and social doctrine and Christian charity. By confidently teaching and witnessing to the Gospel, Catholic educators provide an outstanding education and formation for their students under every circumstance.

**OCM**



# Catholic Curriculum Standards: Faithful to the Core

By Kelly Salomon

When Jill Annable began her role as assistant superintendent in the Diocese of Grand Rapids, the staff was working on rewriting its curriculum standards for all subject areas and all grades, to try to integrate Catholic identity across all content areas.

Educators who have worked on school standards know that it's no small task. Fortunately for Annable and the Diocese of Grand Rapids, timely help provided just what they needed.

"We were drafting and drafting," Annable recalled in a recent podcast produced by the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA), where she now serves as the executive director of academic excellence. She remembers when her superintendent walked into her office and excitedly shared, "It was published, you can use it!" She meant the Catholic Curriculum Standards, which had just been released by The Cardinal Newman Society.

"When I opened it up, I realized that it was the missing piece," Annable told Dr.

Denise Donohue, the Newman Society's deputy director of K-12 programs, who was also a guest on the podcast. "It was the language I needed to use without trying to invent it ourselves."

The Diocese of Grand Rapids isn't the only diocese to find our Catholic Curriculum Standards helpful.

"Since, in every school, the curriculum carries the mission, these Catholic Curriculum Standards are an invaluable contribution to Catholic schools everywhere," says Father John Belmonte, S.J., superintendent of the Diocese of Venice.

"Catholic schools have benefited from the standards-based reform movement in education with one notable exception: the absence of rigorous standards rooted and grounded in our Catholic tradition," Fr. Belmonte continues. "Implementation of the Catholic Curriculum Standards will provide a renewed sense of mission for our Catholic schools operating within the increasingly secularized world of education today."

Today, at least 28 diocesan school systems and many other Catholic schools across the United States—serving more than 270,000 students—use the Catholic Curriculum Standards to replace or supplement their existing diocesan standards.

Catholic Curriculum Standards

With Jesus as its foundation, Catholic education integrally forms all aspects of students' physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual development.

THE CARDINAL NEWMAN SOCIETY

## Common Core concerns

Over the last decade, many public and Catholic schools across the country have adopted the Common Core State Standards. But the Common Core is a secular program designed with utilitarian goals—to lift up under-achieving public school students for success in college and careers. Aside from disagreements about its embrace of controversial methods and educational theories, the Common Core was never intended for the fullness of human flourishing that the Church demands of Catholic education.



(Read more about the Common Core in the article beginning on page 8.)

Giving voice to the concerns of many Catholic families, the Newman Society's "Catholic Is Our Core" program has informed Catholic educators about shortcomings of the Common Core. It began with a campaign by mail, email, social media and web outreach to educate Catholic families, leaders and educators and to urge Catholic schools to reject or at least radically adapt the Common Core standards to the mission of Catholic education. Our analyses have been featured in national Catholic publications and on Catholic radio and television.

In 2013, consistent with many of the Newman Society's concerns, a cadre of Catholic college professors (132 altogether) signed a joint letter stating they were "convinced that Common Core is

so deeply flawed that it should not be adopted by Catholic schools" and that those who had adopted it "should seek an orderly withdrawal." The following year, the education office of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement warning that the Common Core standards alone are insufficient for Catholic schools.

Today it is clear that the Common Core has failed to produce the promised improvements in both public and Catholic schools, and states and dioceses are pulling back from the misguided standards. What now should replace them? The Common Core experience, though messy, helped spark widespread interest among Catholic bishops, educators and families for something better. It is toward that goal that the Newman Society's staff turned, striving for a uniquely Catholic set of standards.

## Providing a solution

In 2015, the Newman Society resolved to answer a question posed by several bishops and diocesan superintendents: "If Catholic education is distinct from secular education, then where are the standards for Catholic educators?"

Our response is the Catholic Curriculum Standards, rooted firmly in the Church's teaching on Catholic education and her long tradition of liberal arts formation in truth, goodness and beauty.

"The first time I read them, I thought this isn't the 'Catholic Common Core.' This is the why and the how, and gives the beauty to why we teach math, why we inquire in science. You wouldn't just slap these standards on top of Common Core," said Annable.

The standards specifically cover the core subjects of English, history, scientific topics and mathematics, but Annable says her diocese was able to apply the standards to elective courses as well, which she says was a "true gift."

Developing the Catholic Curriculum Standards was a labor of love. The Newman Society staff spent two years analyzing Church documents to identify key elements the Church expects to find in all Catholic schools. Those were distilled into the Newman Society's Principles of Catholic Identity in Education, which are similar to Archbishop Michael Miller's "essential marks of Catholic schools," but capturing more of the language and balance of Vatican documents.

For the standards project, the Newman Society's Dr. Dan Guernsey and Dr. Denise Donohue studied these Principles, Church documents, scholarly works related to Catholic education and the Catholic intellectual tradition, and books articulating the nature of liberal arts and classical education. They also met with more than a dozen professors from faithful Catholic colleges to consider what knowledge and formation one should expect from a Catholic school graduate.

## A Catholic foundation

The Catholic Curriculum Standards include "dispositional" standards for each academic discipline, along with expected "content" or "intellectual" standards.

As Guernsey and Donohue were reviewing Church documents for curricular application, they noticed much discussion about the formation of dispositions within students. That topic was much more prominent than concerns about course content. For example:

The Catholic school aims at forming in the Christian those particular virtues which will enable him to live a new life in Christ and help him to play faithfully his part in building up the Kingdom of God. (*The Catholic School*, 1977, 36)

Creating the dispositional standards has proven beneficial for Catholic schools needing to address the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools (NSBECS) for accreditation purposes. Schools using the Cath-

olic Curriculum Standards, along with a solid virtue program, are able to address numerous benchmarks required for accreditation.

For the mathematics standards, the Catholic perspective is primarily dispositional. The Catholic Curriculum Standards expect students to identify truth and falsehood in relationships and to acquire the mental habits of “precise, determined, careful and accurate questioning, inquiry and reasoning.”

Examples of English literature standards include, “Explain how Christian and Western symbols and symbolism communicate the battle between good and evil and make reality visible” and “Demonstrate how literature is used to develop a religious, moral and social sense.” The English standards especially earned high praise from Sandra Stotsky, Ed.D., who is a national consultant in standards development and author of the highly regarded Massachusetts Academic Standards. She proved very helpful

to the Newman Society’s work as well.

“The K-12 standards and suggested readings in Appendix C for the reading/literature curriculum in Catholic schools reflect more than the uniqueness of their intellectual tradition,” Stotsky said. “They also provide the academic rigor missing in most public-school English language arts curricula.”

### Inspiring and crucial

The impact of the Catholic Curriculum Standards over the past five years has been exciting.

“The Catholic Curriculum Standards are EXACTLY what I have been wanting—specific in the areas of faith formation and the pursuit of goodness, truth and beauty, but broad enough to give the teachers latitude in their instructional methods,” said Lynette Schmitz, the principal of St. John Paul II Preparatory School, a Catholic classical hybrid school in St. Louis, Mo.

Derek Tremblay, headmaster of Mount Royal Academy in Sunapee, N.H, agrees. “I thoroughly love the Standards that The Cardinal Newman Society has put out and have yet to find anything comparable.”

Another Catholic school principal, Janice Martinez, principal of Holy Child Catholic School in Tijeras, N.M., said: “I find the standards of education you have recently publicized to be inspiring, I believe the work you do is crucial and support your mission.”

Despite the great success of the Catholic Curriculum Standards, there’s much more work to be done. Standards help establish a school’s priorities and promote the right outcomes of truly faithful Catholic education. But curriculum standards alone can never determine what happens in the classroom.

We hope that the Catholic Curriculum Standards will promote greater integration of the faith in every academic discipline, leading eventually to new and improved textbooks, lesson plans, teacher training and school evaluation.

The complete Catholic Curriculum Standards are available to educators at no cost on the Newman Society’s website, together with helpful appendices and resources to support implementing the standards. Feel free to contact Dr. Denise Donohue at [DDonohue@CardinalNewmanSociety.org](mailto:DDonohue@CardinalNewmanSociety.org) if you are interested in knowing more about the standards and how they might be used in your diocese, school or homeschool program.

**OCM**

**KELLY SALOMON**  
is the director of education and advocacy at The Cardinal Newman Society.



Dr. Denise Donohue helps schools, dioceses and homeschool programs implement the Catholic Curriculum Standards.

# Newman Society, Ruah Woods Team Up on Standards for Christian Anthropology

There is no doubt that our society today has adopted a mistaken view of the human person. That's why The Cardinal Newman Society teamed up with Ruah Woods Press to develop the "Standards for Christian Anthropology," which perfectly complement our Catholic Curriculum Standards.

Dr. Denise Donohue of the Newman Society and Dr. Joan Kingsland of Ruah Woods were the powerhouse team behind this new set of curriculum standards based on St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body.

The standards provide a solid basis for transmitting, incrementally through K-8, the Catholic understanding of the human person according to God's loving design. They are not simply "sex ed" standards, but they go much deeper to help students learn about their human dignity, purpose and self-worth. Students learn how they are infinitely and unconditionally loved by God and called to live in a communion of persons in His image.

**OCM**



“IT WAS MY PLEASURE TO ASSIST WITH THE STANDARDS FOR CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY AS THEY PROVIDE A TRUE CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN DIGNITY AND WORTH WHICH IS SO NEEDED TODAY. THE STANDARDS ARE WRITTEN AT AGE-APPROPRIATE LEVELS, AND I ENCOURAGE SCHOOLS TO USE THESE STANDARDS AS WE ENCOUNTER A WORLD THAT SEEMS TO BE MOVING TOWARD ATHEISM. WE NEED TO GIVE OUR CHILDREN THE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES IN OUR SECULAR WORLD.”

• MARY ANN DRAUDT  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
CURRICULUM & TECHNOLOGY  
DIOCESE OF JOLIET

A screenshot from a webinar featuring two women, Dr. Denise Donohue and Dr. Joan Kingsland, in separate video windows. Dr. Donohue is on the left, wearing a red jacket, and Dr. Kingsland is on the right, wearing a light-colored top. Below them are their names in orange ovals. At the bottom of the screenshot are logos for 'THE CARDINAL NEWMAN SOCIETY' and 'Ruah#Woods PRESS'. The text 'Q &amp; A' is centered above the logos. The Newman Society logo includes the text 'Promoting and Defending Faithful Catholic Education' and 'Cardinalnewmansociety.org'. The Ruah Woods Press logo includes 'Ruahwoodspress.com'.

Dr. Denise Donohue and Dr. Joan Kingsland were hosted on a webinar with John David Kimes of Ruah Woods Press to introduce the Standards for Christian Anthropology. A recording can be viewed at [NewmanSociety.org/OCM](http://NewmanSociety.org/OCM).

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# Secular Resources Can Be Dangerous to Catholic Education

By Patrick Reilly

There are many popular academic programs and resources available to Catholic educators, but most are secular, designed primarily for public schools.

Does “secular” mean that they are unsuitable for Catholics?

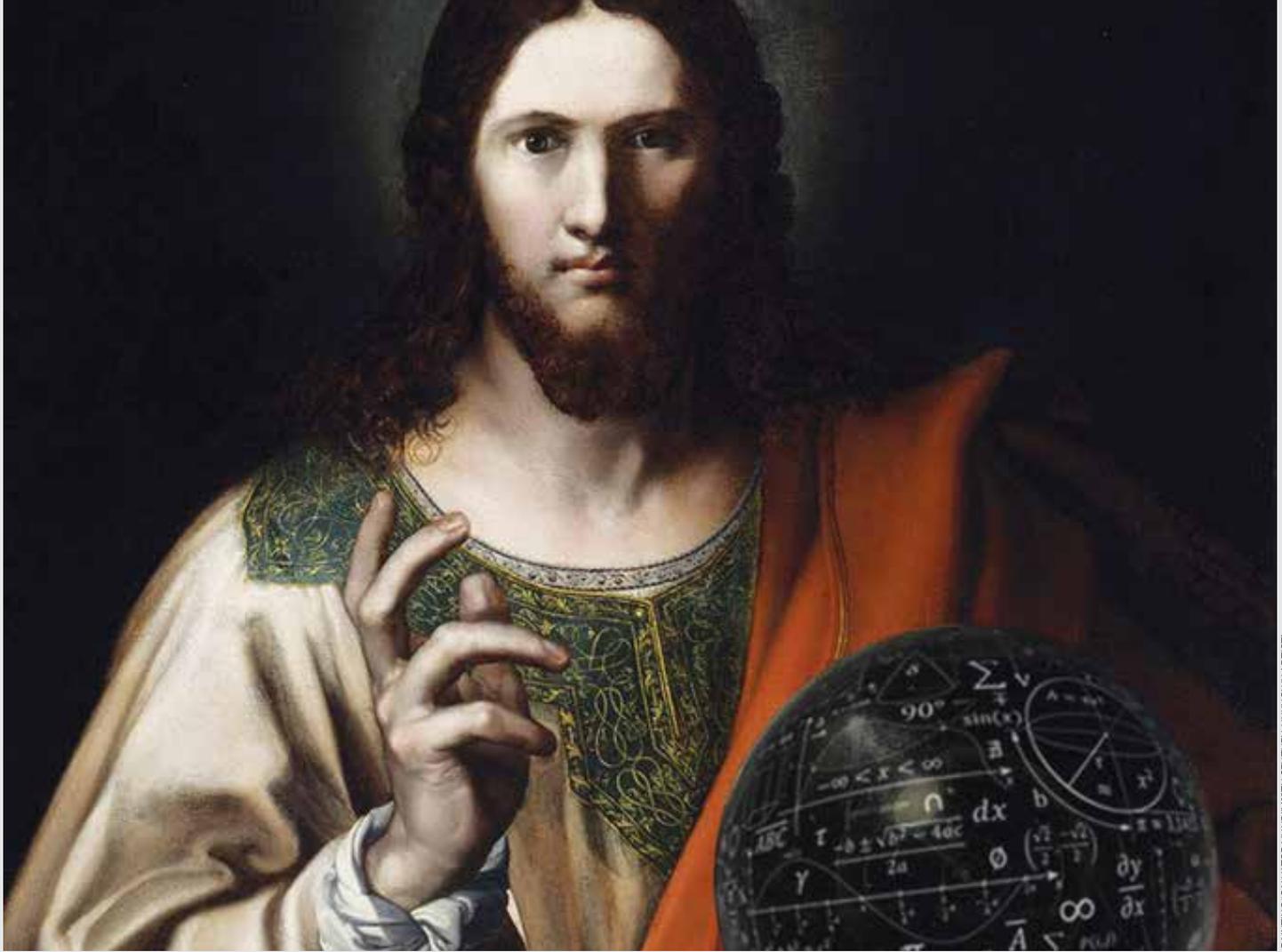
So long as the content does not oppose Catholic teaching, it may seem appropriate to use secular materials and programs. Catholics do not hide from the world. There is no conflict between the truths of our faith and the truths of science, math, history and other human studies. We are not afraid to explore every branch of knowledge, and we respect the methods appropriate to each academic discipline.

Still, there is more to consider when evaluating secular resources. Do they positively advance the mission of Catholic education? Does their use crowd out authentic Catholic formation and learning? Do they implicitly teach relativism and falsehood?

These are questions addressed in The Cardinal Newman Society’s reviews of secular resources including Advanced Placement courses, the Common Core State Standards, the International Baccalaureate program, the Habits of Mind program and secular character development programs—all found on our website under educator resources and at [NewmanSociety.org/OCM](http://NewmanSociety.org/OCM).

Recently, we also published *Policy Standards for Secular Materials and Programs in Catholic Education*, an overview of Catholic principles and recommended standards for Catholic school policies.

“Catholic educators teach and do more,” write the Newman Society’s Dr. Denise Donohue and Dr. Dan Guernsey. “This means they must ask more of any material or program imported into the educational environment and be ready to heavily adapt it toward a greater end.” They also must recognize that “some resources will be woefully insufficient, and others may have elements that actually work against the Catholic mission.”



PAINTING: "SALVATOR MUNDI," 16TH CENTURY, UNKNOWN ARTIST; ORB BY MATH-EMATIC WORLD VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 4.0).

### Three missing elements

Secular education is never complete and can be dangerous, if not enlightened by our Catholic faith. It always lacks three things of the greatest importance:

**1 Secular education refuses to admit the insights of Catholic teaching.** An education that ignores God withholds understanding from its students.

The lack of catechesis is only part of the problem. Secular education restricts understanding in every course of study by eclipsing the light of the Church's teachings, and it allows distortions and falsehoods to creep into every classroom. While subjects can be taught without reference to God, the approach is backward and narrow, deliberately limiting a student's understanding of reality as fashioned by God according to His reason. Ignoring the truths of our faith

implicitly denies the unity of knowledge, and it prevents a truly integrated education with God as the common thread.

Concerning the role of theology in education, St. John Henry Newman asked, "How can we investigate any part of any order of knowledge, and stop short of that which enters into every order? All true principles run over with it, all phenomena converge to it; it is truly the First and the Last."

**2 Secular education also lacks a sure moral and ethical foundation.** An education that ignores God's law withholds wisdom from its students.

While natural law and common sense allow people of very different religious faiths to come to some agreement on moral values, these are often skewed by personal biases and manipulated into ideologies. Today public education is

dominated by moralistic claims that are often false or lack foundation in a true understanding of human dignity.

Again, according to Newman: secular education has the tendency of "throwing us back on ourselves, and making us our own center, and our minds the measure of all things." The best scholar can "become hostile to Revealed Truth" and an "insidious and dangerous foe" of the Church. Therefore, while religion may not be essential to studying many subjects, nevertheless a true moral perspective rooted in Catholic teaching is necessary to preserve the "integrity" of education and the human person.

**3 Secular education lacks the ecclesial mission of Catholic education,** tied to the Church's mission of evangelization and man's purpose of seeking full communion with God. An education that ignores God withholds assistance toward sainthood.

Secular materials and programs in math, literature and even virtue development may appear suitable to Catholic education, because they include much of the same content. But mission drives Catholic education before content. Catholic education forms young people to use their unique human gifts of reason, free will and selfless charity toward the end for which they were created.

Whereas secular education helps students accumulate information and perhaps even develop skills of reasoning, Catholic education “ascends” above knowledge toward transcendental reality—another Newman insight—to better understand and appreciate God’s truth, goodness and beauty as found in creation and in the Church.

Ultimately, then, the gulf between secular and Catholic education is much wider than it may first seem, and secular resources are never as suitable as those designed with an authentic Catholic perspective. Only a faithful Catholic education can integrally form young people in both mind and soul, as God intends.

It is important that Catholic educators remain confident in the superior formation that a faithful Catholic education provides. Secular programs and materials should be examined cautiously, with a preference toward resources that are built upon a Catholic foundation.

### Habits of Mind

An example of the dangers of secular programs can be found in the Habits of Mind program, which is popular in public schools and is making inroads in Catholic schools. Developed by Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick, Habits of Mind teaches 16 intellectual behaviors to help students make productive choices, especially when faced with dichotomies, dilemmas or uncertainties.

Catholics will find much to like in the program. “Many of the Habits of Mind correlate to moral virtues, such as: taking responsible risks (prudence), finding humor

(affability), thinking interdependently (circumspection), remaining open to continuous learning (docility), managing impulsivity (temperance) and persisting (fortitude),” explains Dr. Denise Donohue in the Newman Society’s review.

Nevertheless, we have serious reservations about the program. It attempts to brand a set of virtues that have been promoted since ancient times, and it can tend to overshadow other and even more important habits that should be central to Catholic education, such as the Beatitudes and other Christian dispositions such as humility, gentleness, patience, faithfulness, goodness, godliness, joyfulness, modesty and love.

“THE GULF BETWEEN SECULAR AND CATHOLIC EDUCATION IS MUCH WIDER THAN IT MAY FIRST SEEM. . . ”

With regard to intellectual virtues, the Habits of Mind have a limited focus on problem-solving. They are less helpful in developing the “philosophical habit of



mind” that St. John Henry Newman proposes as the aim of education. A graduate of Catholic education should be able to “ascend” above knowledge to seek truths that are foundational to reality and larger than experience, as in contemplating the natural and eternal law. The Habits of Mind, designed primarily for public schools, are focused on observation and experience but not transcendental truths leading to God the Creator. They also neglect the development of sound reasoning in support of a thesis and respect for authoritative sources, including the Catholic Church.

A good Catholic education should have no need for a program like Habits of Mind. In a Catholic curriculum, virtues overlap and occur throughout all levels and types of student formation. More than problem solving, Catholic education teaches truth and forms students for a lifetime of inquiry that leads to Truth Himself.

We offer recommendations for adapting the Habits of Mind program to Catholic education, but it would be better to adopt to the Newman Society’s Catholic Curriculum Standards (see article on page 4). Our review of Habits of Mind includes a “crosswalk” to show how each of the program’s virtues are already included in the Catholic Curriculum Standards—and so much more.

### Common Core

The Common Core State Standards are another secular remedy intended to improve public education yet adopted by many Catholic schools. Their focus on college and career is inadequate to serve the evangelical mission of Catholic education.

In 2013, the Newman Society’s Dr. Dan Guernsey offered *10 Critically Important Adaptations to the Common Core for Catholic Schools*—an important aid to schools attempting to work with the new standards. But Guernsey warned that such adaptations ultimately fail to address “the fundamental conflict” between the Common Core and the “integral formation of students.” Catholic education teaches truth, goodness and beauty across the entire curriculum. “And, since the object

of every academic discipline is truth, the Catholic curriculum should be based on the conviction that all truths ultimately converge in their source—God.”

Other Newman Society analyses helped clarify concerns about the Common Core. Guernsey and Donohue found that the standards’ “close reading/new criticism” approach to literature is contrary to Catholic education’s emphasis on the “real, rich and wonderful world outside the text.” The standards suggest that “the value of literature is not so much what it teaches us about how to live well, but that it teaches us how to read well (e.g. Just tell me what’s in the report, Johnson!).”

Guernsey was lead author of the Pioneer Institute’s 2016 report, *After the Fall: Catholic Education Beyond the Common Core*, which celebrates “the tremendous insight the Catholic intellectual tradition has always offered into the wonder, value, and glory present in all of God’s creation. Authentic academic inquiry and a fuller understanding of the human experience are completely fulfilled in the Catholic educational experience.”

Today many dioceses are still using the Common Core, part of a tradition of adopting state standards. As states shift to new standards, it is a good time to consider an alternative like the Newman Society’s Catholic Curriculum Standards, which fully embrace the mission of Catholic education.

### International Baccalaureate

Recently it seems the International Baccalaureate (IB) program has been making inroads into Catholic schools, if the IB ads in Catholic publications are any indication. But when the Newman Society published its review of the IB program last year, Catholic schools were only about 2 percent of the 1,800 American schools adopting the program.

The Geneva-based program says it “aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.” Specialties include its college-directed “diploma program” in the last two years of high school and the foundational Theory of Knowledge course.

According to the Newman Society’s reviewers Dr. Denise Donohue and Dr. Dan Guernsey, the IB “takes a relativistic approach to truth” and “insists upon the exclusive use of the constructivist learning approach to the exclusion of other proven instructional methodologies.” This can encourage a constructivist

*philosophy*, suggesting “that man constructs his own knowledge—even of reality—and that nothing exists that is not constructed in one’s own mind.”

Like other secular programs, the IB can crowd out more fully Cath-

olic education. For instance, it requires schools to adopt its learner profile: “All IB learners strive to be Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Open-Minded, Caring, Risk-Takers, Balanced, Principled, and Reflective.” But Donohue and Guernsey warn that these can be limiting and fail to incorporate many Christian virtues that are essential to Catholic formation.

The Newman Society recommends that schools not adopt the IB program. But for those that already have done so, our review recommends many steps that can be taken to adapt the IB program to be more suitable to Catholic education. These changes to the program are extensive and may conflict with IB resources and teacher training.

**OCM**

**PATRICK REILLY**  
is president and founder of  
The Cardinal Newman Society.



“ ONLY A FAITHFUL CATHOLIC EDUCATION CAN INTEGRALLY FORM YOUNG PEOPLE IN BOTH MIND AND SOUL. ”

# CURRICULUM RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES

**VIEW HERE: [NEWMANSOCIETY.ORG/OCM](https://newmansociety.org/ocm)**

## **Critical Race Theory and Cancel Culture**

- Background on Critical Race Theory and Critical Theory for Catholic Educators
- Catholic Education's Call in the Face of 'Cancel Culture'

## **Standards for Christian Anthropology**

- K-8 standards for transmitting a vision of the human person according to God's loving design and St. John Paul's teachings on the human person
- Questions and answers on Christian Anthropology Standards
- Webinar introducing Christian Anthropology Standards

## **Catholic Curriculum Standards**

- Authentically Catholic standards in English, history, mathematics, and scientific topics for grades K-12
- Educating to Truth, Beauty and Goodness
- Webinar on implementing the Catholic Curriculum Standards

- Webinar on how truth, beauty and goodness are incorporated in Catholic Curriculum Standards
- Webinar on using Catholic Curriculum Standards to meet multiple NSBECS Benchmarks

## **Other topics related to curriculum**

- Policy Standards on Secular Academic Materials and Program in Catholic Education
- Procedure and Checklist for the Evaluation and Use of Secular Materials and Programs in Catholic Education
- Analysis of the Habits of Mind Program
- Analysis of Advanced Placement Courses
- Analysis of International Baccalaureate Program
- Analysis of Secular Character Development Programs and Materials
- Policy Standards on Literature and the Arts in Catholic Education
- Maintaining Catholic Identity in Distance Learning Instruction

**The Catholic Curriculum Standards are being used in more than 28 dioceses, including more than 1,000 schools serving 275,290 students.**



**VIEW THESE RESOURCES AND MORE: [NEWMANSOCIETY.ORG/OCM](https://newmansociety.org/ocm)**