



Dear St. Peter Families:

Much discussion and debate is currently taking place across the country, as well as here in Oregon, with regard to the Common Core State Standards Initiative. As a result, many are concerned about how this initiative might impact, for better or for worse, the St. Peter Catholic School. Advocates of the Common Core initiative assert that it will increase the rigor and accountability within the public school system. However, while none would argue with the goal of improving K-12 public education in this country, it is necessary to point out that Catholic schools have been successfully preparing students to enter both the workforce and higher education with high rates of success for well over a hundred years. Here at St. Peter's, we are proud to have done so for more than thirty years.

Catholic education continues to be synonymous with values, academic rigor, order and discipline. After our students move on from St. Peter's, teachers and community members consistently compliment the academic preparation and work ethic of our students. We have been delivering a rigorous curriculum that is aligned to excellence and college readiness for many years. All of the things that the Common Core initiative is presently proposing to address in the public sector have been the traditional focus of Catholic schools in our diocese and across the country for many years. Additionally, and what sets St. Peter's apart, is that our Catholic identity and formation remains at the heart of who we are and what we do; in essence teaching our students to recognize and pursue that which is good, holy, true and beautiful.

The Diocese of Baker Catholic Schools, of which St. Peter Catholic School is part, has decided to **adapt**, but not **adopt**, the Common Core Standards to our instruction. We believe this will best serve our students and families as we prepare students for future success, but without wavering on our commitment to excellence and without compromising our Catholic identity.

It is important to note that Common Core is not a curriculum. It is a set of academic standards or expectations for student mastery at each grade level – essentially a set of proficiency benchmarks. We can, and already do, weave these expectations into our curriculum and consistently exceed the expectations for public school students. This is the beauty of Catholic education, where we can use the standards as a minimum guideline but set our own standards even higher while enriching the instruction with faith related materials. Indeed, we are currently in the first year of a three year process of upgrading our curriculum, starting with Social Studies. We also have the luxury, in our small setting, of grouping our students by ability. Many of you have experienced this first hand with your children participating in some subjects in another classroom (for example, a second grade student going up to third grade for math instruction). In addition, we take pride in our ability and flexibility to pull from various sources in developing our curriculum in a manner that best serves our students, tailoring it to their needs and aptitudes, rather than relying on one book per subject or a pre-determined teaching methodology.

Enclosed is a handout from the Diocese of Baker with additional information about our diocesan schools' adaptation of the Common Core State Standards. We hope you will find it informational and that this letter and the enclosure allay any concerns you may have about the education our St. Peter children receive. If you do have further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Mrs. Hernandez or one of our teachers. And please consider spending some time at the school observing in the classroom. We are confident that you will be pleased with what you see. Finally, we encourage you to remember that a hallmark of Catholic education is our conviction that parents are the first and most important educators of their children. We seek to support you in that and thank you for the loving concern you show about the education of your children by enrolling them in St. Peter Catholic School.

May God Bless You, Your Children and Our Work,

Fr. Jose Thomas Mudakodiyil, Pastor

Armida Hernandez, Administrator