

Building a Framework to Move to the Common Core

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Tell *the Good News* to your children,
and let your children tell it to their children,
and their children to the next generation.

Joel 1:3

Our School

Trinity serves the population of Preschool to Grade 8, with 530 students -- in the metro Detroit area. The church and school has been in existence for 130 years. The school is and has been known for its high standards, outstanding teachers, and excellent facilities. We work hard to make sure the children of the school are fully prepared to go out into the world as Christian citizens, able and excited to defend the faith, and to make a difference for Christ. Our mission is one of outreach: **“sharing Christ’s story with love!”**

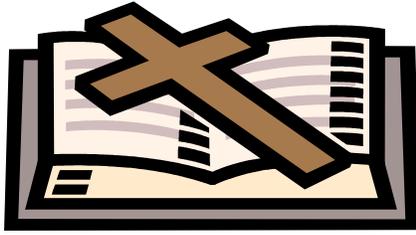
The Project

We have developed a process to move to the Common Core Curriculum -- a standardized set of outcomes that is national in its scope. We have developed **[a framework]** to implement the CCSS, so that we can move forward with a bold transition, with a strong foundation of research, resources, and resolve. A note of interest is that currently only CCSS ELA and Mathematics are available to. To maintain a similar goal of making sure our new curriculum model is one of “a mile deep, not a mile wide,” we will utilize the State of Michigan Power Standards for those subject areas not yet available, which have a similar focus as that of CCSS.

When Trinity’s first accreditation team visited in 2006, it left a list of recommendations that, if completed, would not only allow us to become re-accredited after this cycle, but would allow us to improve our school. Many of the standards of improvement dealt with curriculum. The processes involved would demand that our finished product be structured, standards-based, that we follow a progression within our grades, and most importantly that we tailor-design it to our mission (see above). Some of what we learn and commit to would be a paradigm shift, but a healthy one for our Trinity team. A project of full implementation to the Common Core was too big to tackle in one year. Rather, a study of the components and the building of the structure or framework became the focus. To prepare “the team,” became a crucial component as we moved forward....

The Framework

- Professional Learning Communities
- Response to-intervention-like assessments that include more than annual testing
- Continual Professional Development
- Integration of faith and technology
- A software package to house the curriculum and to allow mapping and collaboration across the grades
- A policy to allow for study and implementation, as well as to provide resources for the same



Project Methods and Actions

“Don’t we already have a great curriculum at our school?” ...has been brought up more than once. Yes, we do. But there are gaps, sometimes a lack of continuity from grade to grade, our current assessment model does not always align with what is being tested and does not always provide the immediate data that we need, and

most importantly the Core Curriculum has fewer standards that are much more in-depth. Also, using Professional Learning Communities, we have made “reaching every child” a top priority. To be effective, 21st-century Christian school administrators must be creative and innovative, develop excellent skills that cross many management disciplines, see patterns where many see only chaos, build teams across constituencies, and be prime examples of their Christian tradition as they manage increasingly complex school operations.

This is a Mission-Driven project and included the following components that were covered in a Professional Development Day, early on:

- Foundations of Curriculum in our Christian School
- Q: What is “textbook-driven” vs. “curriculum driven”?
- The value of curriculum mapping
- Common Core and the MI Power Standards: an introduction
- Creating “essential questions”
- Introduction to *Curriculum Trak*—software to house the Common Core and Power Standards

Mr. Dan Beerens was the consultant for this project. Initial conversations took place in August of 2011 and continued at different times. Discussions with him were invaluable to make sure we stayed focused on the right plan of action. He led us in our Professional Development Day in November of 2011, and he created a Wiki for the Trinity Lutheran School staff – based upon the PD day and our perceived needs.

Although not all of the following events were directed by the consultation with Mr. Beerens, many of them were.

- ✓ Our Board of Christian Day School created and passed a policy of curriculum review and development, to include the Common Core and Power Standards
This was a requirement of accreditation and allowed the principal and staff to begin a process to cover all subject areas.
- ✓ I attended two webinars – through LEA [Lutheran Education Association] and NAESP [National Association of Elementary School Principals] – both centered around the understanding of and implementation of moving to Common Core
This allowed for a time of Q & A and provided for more opportunities to talk with professionals to receive answers.
- ✓ We used an NAESP template to create a customized version for Trinity of an Implementation Checklist
This could possibly be one of the most important parts of this project. In essence, it is still a template that can be revised as needed, but it also is a practical piece that can be shared with other schools that are ready for implementation. It provides many answers and also step-by-step directions.

- ✓ Applied for Title IIA funding for staff resources. Received three: **Mentoring Minds Flip Charts** and the booklet ***Understanding Common Core State Standards***, by John Kendall, as well as **Curriculum Trak** software
Each of the funding requests was approved. Teachers were asked to read the booklet and to study the flip charts (one contained the grade-specific curriculum; the other K – 6, or 7 – 12) over the summer. The software will be populated with the curriculum and will be set up, also over the summer.
- ✓ We spent Faculty Meeting time to discuss the transition and to help create buy-in
Much of the time was spent on how the switch to the CCSS would benefit the children of the school; the components were all focused on “success for every child”.
- ✓ We sent teachers to various conferences
Both Language Arts and Mathematics were covered.
- ✓ We have taken the lead in developing sectionals for Common Core understanding for the Principals of Large Schools Conference in January of 2013
Through this school project, we have been authorized to make the contacts and set up sectionals for the POLS Conference in Frankenmuth, Michigan in January of 2013 for the principals of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, who will attend.
- ✓ We have consulted with Van Lunen Faculty member Mona Faulkner about her transition to the Common Core in her Vermont Diocese schools
This conversation centered around the practicalities of working through the details. Since all of her Diocesan schools were moving to CCSS, this was extremely helpful.
- ✓ We have participated in the Macomb/Oakland Principals in-services with Bob Sornsen, Ph.D, (Aug 2011) and with Lisa Meyers, Ph.D. (Feb 2012)
These were actual opportunities to ask questions in-person. Critical questions answered dealt with current status of other subject areas, assessment, and of the benefits to students and the schools who are making the change.
- ✓ We have studied rti and may move from an annual testing model to one of 2 – 3 times per year, looking for immediate feedback for our teachers and parents
We currently use Iowa Basic Test of Skills, administered each March, with results to the school and parents by late May. The preferred model of testing would be MAPS, or Measures of Academic Progress. Results are available within one day of testing. All testing is done via the computer. The other option is to work directly with Riverside Publishing (see below), as they develop assessments for Common Core through the auspices of the Iowa tests.
- ✓ We have initiated Professional Learning Communities
We began by learning how PLC’s can benefit the students and teachers. This has replaced our model of Department Meetings, and each time teachers spend time talking about students and their needs, as well as solutions that will help them grow.
- ✓ We have changed our schedule
This was a large undertaking. Our schedule has been very similar for over a decade. We were very bold in taking this initiative and opportunity to create blocks of time and to coordinate Language Arts and Mathematics times for teachers. For the 2012 – 2013 year, we will pilot this schedule, and make changes based upon successes and challenges within the year. The impetus for the change was moving to the new curriculum (the timing was perfect), as well as for better collaboration opportunities for staff.
- ✓ We changed from Gesell to Brigance testing at the Kindergarten level and initiated DIBELS testing in grades 1 – 2, to move to 3 and 4 in 2012 – 2013

This type of testing is specifically geared to early literacy success, testing more often than annually, and making the data available to teachers and families. Results are graphed to show change as it occurs, over time.

- ✓ We will meet with Riverside Publishing in July 2012 to determine how they can provide resources for Common Core, as well as rti.

Riverside Publishing is taking the lead in speaking with Michigan Principals to ensure they can meet our needs.

Project Results

The framework is either in place, or will be by the start of the 2012 – 2013 school year. The whole process was quite complicated, but the current staff in place at Trinity is the right one for this change. 2012 – 2013 will be a year of transition – moving more elements in place for the Common Core and for the Power Standards. Our goal is to initiate full implementation for the 2013 – 2014 school year.

Reflections on the Overall Project and Lessons Learned

There are still many questions out there, and there will most likely always be some unanswered ones when one works with curriculum. As our Faculty studied moving to the Common Core, we were convinced that it would be a positive change, especially to move towards a more student-centered mindset.

Change is not an easy thing to grasp or to get 100% buy-in. It took conversation, outside speakers, study of the components, but most importantly, the realization of the benefits available.

Building the framework instead of trying to implement in one year was very wise. We were overwhelmed with the information available. It was interesting that throughout the year, the number of sources, the conversations, and the webinars and workshops available grew at an astounding rate. This told us that the nation is indeed gearing up for this monumental effort, in most of the states of our country.

There is excitement building in our school! “Selling it” was not easy, but with some of the components already in place, and realizing that we are indeed ahead of many schools and districts in implementation, we feel we have positioned ourselves not only for success, but perhaps as leaders in our community.

Companies are working hard to provide resources to schools. One can see this from some of the major “players,” like NAESP, Education Week, ASCD, and within those that provide assessments.

We should have a common lesson planning module so it is visible to teachers at all grade levels. This may be provided through our **Curriculum Trak** software, or we may have to go to a program like **Planbook.com**.

We will need to begin curriculum mapping, which will help us to further articulate the process.

Continued Professional Development will be crucial, as we hit obstacles and look for solutions.

Resource List

Leading School Change, by Todd Whitaker

The School Leader's Guide to Professional Learning Communities, by Richard and Rebecca DuFour

Aligning Your Curriculum to the Common Core State Standards, by Joe Crawford

Understanding Common Core State Standards, by John Kendall/ASCD

Common core Flip Charts, by Mentoring Minds

White Paper *10 Steps for Migrating Your Curriculum to the Common Core*, by Achieve 3000

Article *Does the Common Core Matter*, by Tom Loveless, Education Week, 18 Apr 12

Article *The Common Core and You*, NAESP, Apr 12

Webinar *The Common core Standards: Preparing America's Children for Success in the 21st Century*, by
Dr. Pamela S. Zimmerman/Assoc. Professor of Education, Concordia University, Chicago, 10 May
12

Webinar *Principal Leadership for the Common Core: Synthesize, Prioritize, Maximize*, by NAESP, 03
May 12

Curriculum 21: Essential Education for a Changing World, Edited by Heidi Hayes Jacob

Mapping the Big Picture: Integrating Curriculum & Assessment K – 12, by Heidi Hayes Jacob

www.corestandards.org

www.achievethecore.com

PARCC – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

SBAC – Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

McREL – Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning

The students will benefit most from this project! It is the number one reason for implementation at Trinity. As has been stated, the school is and has been known for its quality, a “school of choice” in the Utica community. Having prepared students that love their Lord Jesus and want to serve Him in every aspect of their lives is what we aim to accomplish. Students will be even more equipped than they had been. Our effectiveness of “sharing Christ’s story with love!” will be further enhanced.

To God be the glory!

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CHRIST'S STORY
WITH LOVE