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Honors Thesis

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Abstract

In 2009, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) revolutionized academic standards, providing a format adopted by states across America that focused on raising Math and English Language Arts standards as preparation for colleges and careers. In conjunction with the adoption and implementation of the CCSS across the United States, Catholic schools have worked towards the strengthening and advancement of their own educational systems. This thesis first examines the background of the CCSS, including implementation and professional development, as well as the opposition regarding the standards. The paper presents an overview of the history of academic standards in Catholic education and then explores the current role of the CCSS in Catholic schools. Through interviews with teachers, principals, and superintendents in Catholic education, this study examines how two archdioceses understood and implemented the standards.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research Study

Section 1: Background of the Problem

This thesis analyzed the ways in which Catholic schools from various dioceses and archdioceses responded to the introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). To effectively answer that question, the thesis examined the background of the CCSS, as well as a brief history of academic standards in Catholic education. It also discussed strategies for implementation, tools for assessment, and concerns about the standards. This thesis approached the CCSS in order to provide balanced information about the standards, and should not be read as an opinion about the quality of the CCSS.

Several sets of interviews offered the data for this study. In an archdiocese that had adapted the CCSS for their standards, an assistant superintendent, an elementary school principal, and an elementary school teacher answered questions about their experiences with the CCSS. Interviews with a superintendent, principal, and teacher of an archdiocese without the CCSS provided the perspective of the alternative position on the CCSS. The interview questions prompted participants to describe the factors that contributed to their decision, the tools they used for implementation, their professional development, the correlation between Catholic identity and the standards, and their concerns about the CCSS.

At the time of the study, limited amounts of pertinent research literature existed. Of the literature that did exist, most was theoretical research rather than experimental. The majority of the literature research explained the defining characteristics of the CCSS, explaining the logic and research behind the creation of the standards. The Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative, one of few sources for information about the CCSS in

Catholic education, tied together the research on the CCSS and the research on Catholic education. Two content areas made up the CCSS, English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, so the research typically derived from two separate disciplines, those with expertise in literacy education and those with experience in math education. This study focused primarily on ELA research. Many articles offered specific examples of methods for implementing the standards into a school or classroom, while others addressed professional development for teachers as they implemented the standards and for administrators to support teachers as they piloted the CCSS. Significant opposition rose up at the introduction of the CCSS and persisted steadily, so the research also analyzed the reasons for this opposition and how schools responded to parents' concerns.

This thesis contributed to the existing research on the CCSS and Catholic education in several ways. Minimal research existed about the Catholic schools that implemented the CCSS or the dioceses that chose not to adopt them, so this study explored the importance of academic standards in Catholic schools and the best ways for them to make changes, two aspects that had thus far been unexamined. The research also offered a look at Catholic schools using the CCSS. Because the study took place shortly after the release of the CCSS, few then-existing studies could examine programs' implementation. This study's interviews with superintendents, principals, and teachers offered a wide perspective on the CCSS, particularly on their implementation, which many studies lacked, as the majority of the articles were written by teachers or by educational philosophers rather than incorporating a variety of perspectives from different levels.

The questions raised from the initial review of the literature led to the development of a research question that first explored why Catholic schools would choose to use the CCSS and second determined how Catholic schools utilized their standards, whether they were the CCSS or not. The research question asked, *What factors lead to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for Catholic schools, and how do Catholic schools implement their academic standards?*

Section 2: Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined as follows:

Common Core State Standards: The Common Core State Standards are a set of standards adopted by 43 states. Only the English Language Arts (CCSS-ELA) and Mathematics (CCSM) standards exist. The standards developed as a way to unify instruction in states across the country, to prevent the disparity that made changing schools unnecessarily detrimental, to raise standards nationally, and to prepare students for college and careers. Chapter 2, the Review of the Literature, detailed a greater explanation of the standards. Throughout the study, the Common Core State Standards will be referred to as the CCSS.

Catholic schools: Catholic schools will be the focus of this study. This does not address religious education in a church setting, only in an academic school setting. This category will not include private schools of any type other than Catholic ones.

Curriculum vs. Standards: Standards refer to the broad descriptions of what must be taught in a school year at a certain grade level and for specific content areas. They are typically assessed at the end of a school year, and the success of the school and teacher is often based on the students' proficiency in the standards.

Curriculum, however, is a further breakdown of standards. A district, school, or even an individual teacher often develops the curriculum, and it refers to the specifics of what must be met within a classroom in order to meet the broader standards for a year. Standards determine what must be taught in a year, and curriculum states how they will be taught. These two terms should not be confused with each other. The CCSS are standards, not curriculum.

Assessment: While there are several types of assessment, the assessments addressed in this thesis will be summative assessment, unless otherwise noted. Summative assessment determines how much students understand from the year and how many standards they met. Summative assessments are intended for use at the completion of a unit or year, while formative assessments are used prior to or during a unit so as to develop instruction in the most effective way. Summative assessments include the high-stakes assessments that measure the success of a school district and are therefore most related to statewide standards. Unless otherwise noted, the assessments reviewed in this study are summative, standardized assessments.

Section 3: Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

Because this study was done as an undergraduate thesis, challenges arose such as little background experience, minimal funding, and relatively small amounts time allotted to the development and research of this thesis. This limitation meant very little hands-on research could be conducted, particularly research done with human subjects.

The size of the sample was small, meaning that the results were more specific to the people interviewed and were therefore difficult to extend to a larger population.

Section 4: Summary of the Chapter

This thesis examined the role of the Common Core State Standards in Catholic schools, asking the question, *What factors lead to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for Catholic schools, and how do Catholic schools implement their academic standards??* The methodology included interviews from several principals and assistant superintendents in Catholic education, from archdioceses in various states of adoption and implementation of the CCSS. As American education changed drastically due to the introduction of the CCSS, Catholic schools decided how they should respond to the shifts, a decision that had varying impacts on varying dioceses; to see the effects of the CCSS in Catholic schools, more research must be done to understand the background, implementation, and ideology behind the changes.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Section 1: Introduction

This chapter communicated the review of the literature regarding the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Catholic education. It explored the CCSS in depth, examining the development, principles, and important points. The chapter summarized the findings on implementation of the standards, including a section dedicated to professional development. Another section considered concerns raised about the CCSS. The study also gave an overview of the history of academic standards in Catholic schools and the response of modern Catholic education to the CCSS.

This chapter acted as a grounding in which the methodology was rooted. Without this understanding of the relevant literature, the methodology stood alone and without

support. The communication of the following research gave a better understanding of the existing research as a means of prefacing the new research.

Section 2: Background on Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards, hereafter referred to as the CCSS, came into existence from the work of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) for a number of reasons. Released in 2009 and published in 2010, Kentucky became the first state to implement the standards in 2012. At the time of the study, English language arts (CCSS-ELA) and mathematics (CCSS-M) existed as the only domains of the standards, though they may later be developed into science, social studies, and fine arts. Two assessments worked with the CCSS, further discussed in Section 3 (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, p. 153). As of December 2014, 43 states, four territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity adopted the standards at some stage of the implementation process, as reported by the CCSS website.

The development of the CCSS aimed to meet a few goals. An article entitled "Three Core Shifts to Deliver on the Promise of the Common Core Standards" identified three key aspects that prompted the development of the CCSS. The three key components included enhancements of previous state academic standards in English and math, results from international comparisons, and domestic reports and recommendations (Coleman, et al., 2012, p. 9). The standards strove to prepare students for college and careers by high school graduation. The standards themselves came from a set of guidelines entitled the College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards, a broader, general set of standards (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013, p. 70). The CCSS took the framework of the CCR and

developed them into stronger and more specific academic standards detailing what every student should be able to do by the time they graduate high school. The addition of Speaking and Listening skills as subsections of the CCSS-ELA came from the CCR guidelines. The Gates Foundation, an organization that traditionally supported college and career readiness, also played a foundational role in the creation of the CCSS (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, p. 154).

The CCSS hoped to create one set of standards that many states could adopt, a state-led initiative to unify the education of the nation. By raising the standards and then applying those standards nationwide, the United States wanted to again become competitive on a global scale (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, p. 153). The CCSS developed as a more globally-informed set of standards that also compressed what many sets of standards presented in the past. The role of standards played a strongly different part in education than the role of curriculum, though the two often get confused. Standards differed from curriculum in that standards spelled out *what* must be taught in a grade level rather than spelling out exactly *how* to teach the material (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013, p. 70). The *how* of teaching, instead, was part of curriculum, separate from the CCSS. The CCSS helped only to direct the curriculum, not replacing the existing curriculum in schools. The CCSS documents stated that the CCSS "define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach" (NGA & CCSSO, 2010). A common misunderstanding, teachers were meant to keep their existing curriculum and incorporate the standards over time. If incorporated effectively, the standards brought about continuity across grades. As the standards built over time, they

began with less complex concepts and developed those standards in later grades as they become age appropriate (McLaughlin, 2013, p. 53).

In addition to the strengthening of standards and the uniting of the many states' varying standards, two incentives encouraged states to adopt the CCSS. First of all, the federal government's Race to the Top program encouraged states to employ a common set of rigorous standards. Some argued that adopting the CCSS improved their chances of receiving funding from the federal government, even though the standards did not specifically affiliate with the federal government. Secondly, the CCSS allowed states to add up to 15% of their own content to the standards. For states that incorporated their own history or culture into the standards, this added leeway to preserve their state's independence while still improving their academics and building continuity across the country (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, p. 154).

The CCSS-ELA initiated three substantial shifts in the way of teaching literacy in schools. Those shifts included: an increase in content-rich nonfiction, reading and writing grounded in evidence from the text, and regular practice with complex text and academic vocabulary (Schmoker & Jago, 2013, p. 60). When properly applied, these three shifts presented in every aspect of the classroom, including assessment design, curriculum, and professional development. All three shifts combined complex texts with preparation for college and careers, an important effort as only 35% of high school seniors were proficient in reading, according to the 2005 NAEP, and only one in ten eighth graders was targeted to be ready for college by high school graduation. The CCSS developed these ELA changes to directly target and improve those statistics (Coleman, et al., 2012, p. 10.).

By building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction, students gained a wider and deeper understanding of both what they read and about the world around them. Research indicated that students learned best when they engaged in the subject through personal experience and were exposed to more information, both of which happened frequently in reading informational texts. Students gained a more developed general knowledge, as well as a wider vocabulary from non-fiction texts. As part of the CCSS's aim to prepare students for college and careers, comfort reading nonfiction directly linked to a student's ability to read successfully and best prepared students for the type of reading skills necessary for success in college. The shift towards informational texts responded to the less than ten percent of elementary texts that were nonfiction prior to the effects of the CCSS. Because nonfiction could be a more confusing genre, teachers must emphasize close and careful reading to avoid failures in comprehension (Coleman, et al., 2012, p. 10).

The second shift, reading and writing grounded in evidence from literary and informational texts, prepared students of all ages to understand the value of rooting their writing and thinking in evidence. The CCSS-ELA required students to write based on what they learned from the text, rather than writing about their own personal experiences and emotions, requiring that they actually read the text closely. The standards also incorporated narrative writing, but the introduction of evidence-based writing at a young age acted as a new and important change as it required students to carefully analyze the text in order for them to defend their claims substantially and present clear information (Coleman, et al., 2012, p. 11).

The third shift put students in regular contact and practice with complex texts, including their accompanying syntax and vocabulary. One author presented the data that a student's ability to read, understand, and respond to complex texts indicated their college and career readiness more significantly than any other factor, most likely due to the fact that complex texts facilitated the acquisition of key academic vocabulary with a deeper understanding than simple memorization (Coleman, et al., 2012, p. 11). The CCSS defined text complexity as "inherent difficulty of reading and comprehending a text combined with consideration of reader and task variables." This shift developed on the assertion that reading textbooks declined in difficulty and sophistication throughout the twentieth century, linked directly to the decline in college readiness, an argument based on two studies looking at sentence length and vocabulary levels.

Beyond the standards, the CCSS also created three appendices to provide further information about the development of the standards and how to use them. Some educators viewed the appendix as the strength of the CCSS approach (Shmoker & Jago, 2013, p. 59), while others considered them the greatest weakness of the standards, further discussed in Section 4. Appendix A detailed the research basis for the standards and explained some of the newer or more important terms at the center of the CCSS, Appendix B provided a list of suggested texts for use in a CCSS curriculum, and Appendix C offered samples of student work as examples of what the standards might look like in effect. The remainder of this section further explored the aspects and effects of Appendices A and B.

Appendix A looked at the research behind the standards, and it primarily addressed text complexity, explaining the many components of determining text

complexity. Two components comprised text complexity, the qualitative dimension and the quantitative dimension, both of which directed how texts should be read. The qualitative dimension referred to aspects that could only be understood by the human reader, such as meaning and purpose. Only a thinking brain could decode the qualitative dimension. Conversely, the quantitative dimension of textual complexity indicated the statistical aspect easily determined by a computer. This included word frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion, all of which required an analysis of words in terms of numbers instead of thoughts (McLaughlin, 2013, p. 54). Appendix A also commented on reading and text considerations, explaining that they depended on the reader himself and the purpose of the task being assigned. The CCSS should incorporate more than only informational texts. For example, if a teacher wanted to improve students' abilities to answer factual questions, they should provide a scientific text, but if they wanted to develop a personal connection or narrative skill, then they should most likely utilize a novel or short fictional story. While text complexity was the central source of rigor in the CCSS, educators must ultimately remember that text complexity composes only a *part* of the process, not the final decider (McLaughlin, 2013, p. 53).

Appendix B's text exemplar should be used as options and recommendations for text use but not as requirements of the CCSS. The list's creation was meant to be a springboard for teachers trying to think of appropriate instructional materials, not to be used uncritically or exclusively. Teachers could actually entirely ignore Appendix B and still effectually and accurately implement the CCSS (Moss, 2013, p. 48). Some teachers to voice concern about the large number of older works, worried that the list showed little appreciation for current writing (McLaughlin, 2013, p. 54). For books to be chosen for

the text exemplar, it needed to meet three qualifications. The books on the list met standards for book quality, including modern and historical classics, breadth of genre and subject matter, and text complexity in the quantitative and qualitative measurements (Moss, 2013, p. 48-49). Appendix B emphasized the importance of close reading, explaining that close reading supported engagement with the texts, improved understanding of materials, and promoted growth in students' ability to complete basic literacy skills. Appendix B reminded that solely reading texts would not improve students' understanding of the material. The Kansas State Department of Education provided an example of a template to analyze a text for whether it should be added to a curriculum, allowing teachers to expand from the exemplar when choosing texts for their own classrooms (McLaughlin, 2013, p. 54-55).

Section 3: Implementation in Schools

Studying the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) necessitated a basic understanding of the development of the standards and their basic components. The next key area to understand unfolded as the various ways in which schools implemented the CCSS. The types of studies published varied in how they communicated implementation methods. Some schools explained the specific programs they found useful while others made broad philosophical or hyptohetical suggestions for how teachers and administrators should approach them.

Because Kentucky first implemented the standards, they more completely developed an implementation plan while many other programs remained in the earlier stages at the time of this study. One article, "Effectively Leading Your School in Incorporating Common Core State Standards," explained implementation in terms of the

responsibilities of the administrator and the roles of the classroom teacher. The article labeled the administrator's primary job to be supporting classroom teachers, as teachers proved to be more apprehensive and needed as much help as possible from those in charge of curriculum development. In the situation explained in the article, networks of school leaders, including principals, teachers in various content areas, and superintendents, met eight to nine times a year to focus on curriculum development. Another key focus emphasized communicating as effectively as possible with teachers and keeping them involved in the process (Simpson, 2013, p. 7). The article explained that involving teachers meant avoiding conflict because "people often resent change when they have no involvement in how it should be implemented…they resist being controlled" (Blanchard, as cited in Simpson, 2013, p. 7).

The role of the classroom teacher, as explained in the article, pertained specifically to their goals. The general education teacher's role integrated literacy focuses into every discipline, not just reading, but also math, science, and social studies. They developed an understanding of the listening and speaking standards, as those standards added a new component of literacy instruction, and teachers were encouraged to build a relationship between elementary schools and higher education to strengthen the commitment to college readiness. They incorporated a variety of media and types of literature into reading. Above all, teachers needed to know what students learned prior to entering their grade, made easier by the alignment of the standards, and they needed to understand what the students should learn throughout the year, allowing for more effective instruction (Simpson, 2013, p. 7-8).

Another article, "The Common Core: Insights into the K-5 Standards," suggested six essential tasks for teachers to unpack in order to best incorporate the standards. First, the article recommended that teachers read the College and Career Readiness standards upon which the CCSS were built in order to better understand the CCSS, as the two sets of standards employed similar goals and a similar format of literacy through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The article recommended reading vertically through each category in the standards to understand the structure and specific expectations before and after the grade they taught, and also recommended reading the standards horizontally within their grade to see how the standards taught related to and built off of one another. A seemingly obvious suggestion, the article pointed out that teachers must know what to teach in order to best help their students' understanding, and they must use assessments directly related to the standards so that the instruction could be relevant and purposeful (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, p. 155, 157).

Identifying a system for how to decide on curriculum by first breaking down the standards helped make the standards attainable, as "Simplifying the ELA Common Core; Demystifying Curriculum," suggested. First, teachers picked texts that could be covered in the nine-month school year. The authors recommended picking texts based on merit, complexity, and appeal. That structure allowed for one nonfiction and one fiction text per seven-week quarter, giving time for the teacher to instruct so that students could engage in the texts without having to use "pseudo-literacy" activities that actually detracted from literacy instruction. By using this system, the curriculum did not actually change substantially. Teachers still drew on inquiry-based tasks, such as analysis, discussion, and writing, using close reading, and building vocabulary through texts. The standards simply

directed and aligned the curriculum to lead to college readiness (Schmoker & Jago, 2013, p. 60).

A survey of southeastern states addressed many components of initial implementation, delving into the reasons for decisions and how the implementation panned out over time. Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina participated in the survey, and they answered questions about the process used to adopt the standards, the process of implementation, and theirs plan for assessment (Anderson, et al., 2012, p. iiv).

When asking about the process that the states used to adopt the standards, the survey focused on the rationale for why the states supported the standards and what contributed to the process for agreeing to implement them. All of the states attributed part of their decision to building parity across the states, rigorous expectations of the standards, and a commitment to college and career readiness. Five of the six states cited part of the decision to the ability to collaborate with other states, including an increased ability to share resources like instructional materials, textbooks, professional development, and assessments. The CCSS also aimed to improve consistency in academic goals and standardization of outcomes across state lines. Three of the states revised their academic standards shortly before the release of the CCSS, so they switched over because the CCSS built up their existing standards, and four of the states considered the added benefit of an improved chance of Race to the Top funding. Part of the reasoning for Georgia's adoption of the standards was that the standards were created as part of a state-led initiative rather than a national requirement, and one of the factors for the adoption of the standards in North Carolina was that educational leaders believed the

standards to be more permanent as a multi-state movement than they would have been if created by the state themselves. When asked who was most influential in a state's decision to implement the standards, all states answered that the governor and chief state school officer played the most vital roles in the incorporation of the standards. Half the states also mentioned their state boards of education and other roles, such as educators, parents, interest groups, or the business community (Anderson, et al., 2012, p. 6-7).

The next question, which asked about the implementation process, revealed less consistency across the states. Each state responded with a different timeline for implementation. Some states began using the ELA standards the year after they implemented math standards, and some did the reverse; some used both immediately, some began with a different grade each year, and others waited until later to implement all of the standards simultaneously. Alabama explained that they chose to stagger the adoption of the standards by subject to spread out the cost of textbooks and allow for professional development to become more established. Mississippi started in lower grades because lower grades did no participate in high-stakes assessments, allowing for more familiarity with the standards before assessing students on their progress (Anderson, et al., 2012, p. 11). When asked how the states planned to assess the standards, all states responded that they were in early stages of development and not yet aware how the assessments would be used (Anderson, 2012, p. 15).

One study explained how to handle the technology requirements of the CCSS-ELA, including some of the challenges and suggestions for overcoming those problems. The primary concern came from the lack of technology equity, both in access and in skills-training. One of the assessments developed, the Partnership for Assessment of

Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), was only online and computer-based.

Twenty-two states agreed to use the PARCC, a test created to gauge college and career

readiness in CCSS-ELA and CCSS-M, but it required technology accessibility. This

requirement may not seem like a roadblock, but as of June 2013, a typical American

home had the same amount of broadband as a typical school, though two hundred times

as many people used a school's Internet as used a home Internet. As low as 20% of

America's schools possessed the degree of Internet needed for computerized testing,

compared to the 100% of schools with the necessary Internet in South Korea. In June

2013, however, President Barack Obama vowed that 99% of America's students would

be connected to high speed Internet within five years of his promise (Saine, 2013, p.

100). While this effort would make many strides toward technological equity, teachers

still needed training in order to effectively use technology for the CCSS. In a survey done

for the article, ten principals and teachers in three states reported that 80% of them had

full Internet access in their classrooms, while 100% used digital technology in the

classroom. They reported many grants that helped their technological situations,

including one that allowed a school to keep its media center open at night so that parents

and students could use it, and another one that provided online reading tools. They

reported that the most helpful grants allowed for teachers to get training in technology

use (Saine, 2013, p. 102).

Another article explained the importance of teachers understanding how to use the

assessments that accompanied the CCSS-ELA. Patricia Sarles (2013) explained the two

assessments developed for the CCSS and what those assessments looked for to determine

proficiency. One important aspect of the new assessments assessed students on the

process of learning rather than on memorization of facts and recalling them. This form of

assessment meant that teaching to this form of test would mean helping children learn

how to think and engage in inquiry. Two assessments aligned directly with the CCSS, the

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Twenty-two states used the PARCC,

a test made up of three aspects: literary analysis, narrative, and research simulation. For

the PARCC, students in grade three and up were asked to write two analytic essays based

on synthesizing information from multiple sources. Twenty-five states used the SBAC,

composed of four parts that reflected the sections of the CCSS-ELA: reading, writing,

speaking and listening, and research and inquiry. Both assessments partnered with

schools to create the most effective assessments for the individual districts. At the time of

this study, very little research investigated these assessments, but each website provided

examples and more information (Sarles, 2013, p. 10-11).

In an article titled, "Literacy Reform and Common Core State Standards:

Recycling the Autonomous Model," Stergios Botzakis, Leslie David Burns, and Leigh A.

Hall wrote about the autonomous model of literacy, a one-size-fits-all approach to

teaching literacy and language arts development (2014). The CCSS, they argued, fell into

this model.

While the CCSS warned against teachers basing all of their instruction on the

standards, most of the problems with the CCSS implementation are due to teachers

failing to reach beyond the standards to provide effective instruction. An autonomous

model worries that teachers may begin to focus only on meeting standards rather than

understanding students' individual needs and striving to meet them. This approach results

partly in high amounts of anxiety about any negative change in test scores, leading teachers to teach to the test rather than the student.

This autonomous model often happened when theories are developed solely from small pockets of research with minimal amounts of realistic application to education. Researchers, many of whom have spent little or no time in actual classrooms, conduct studies and base programs entirely from their results without having a full understanding of what effective practice requires.

The article essentially asserted that the problem lay not with the CCSS or with any academic standards at all, but rather identified the problem to be narrow literacy programs based on limited research that allowed for no other instruction or incorporation of students' needs. While the CCSS were stated clearly, teachers and schools must develop their own implementation, which boasted its definite benefits but also meant schools suffered if they struggled to develop a successful implementation plan. As schools worked to implement the CCSS, this article served as a reminder to balance instruction between teaching the standards and integrating students' background and specific needs.

Section 3a: Professional Development

Professional development, referring to the education needed for teachers and administrators to have the necessary knowledge and tools for implementing the standards, consistently appeared as such an important and expansive domain that became a subsection of implementation for the purposes of this study. Professional development typically occurred outside of the classroom, but it direct affected what happened in the classroom and was therefore connected to but not defined by implementation.

"The Missing Link in the CCSS Initiative: Professional Development for Implementation" investigated literature on professional development and applied it to the CCSS. The study began by examining how the CCSS differed from other standards, which included a more globally-informed and more compressed set of standards. The CCSS reworked and added to the failed College and Career Readiness (CCR) guidelines. Teachers needed professional development equivalent to the vast number of changes from past standards to CCSS so that they deeply understood their role in the transition. The correlation was one-to-one between mandates like the CCSS and the supports necessary. As expectations from many different sources bombarded teachers, they began to feel anxious about the standards in general, which effective professional development expertly combatted. Professional development for educators centered around two concepts: first, what teachers knew, and, second, how they taught. Both concepts *directly* affected how students learned, so the ultimate goal was to improve student success and learning (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013, p. 71, 73). The most effective professional development, as determined by Jenkins and Agamba (2013), focused first on teacher needs and then examined how to meet those needs.

The article outlined six features of successful professional development, determined through a review of the existing literature. Those features were: a focus on content taught and methods used, opportunities for active learning, duration of training, collective participation, coherence of format, and alignment (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013, p. 73). Applied to the CCSS, the article recommended walking through each standard individually, allowing teachers to take ownership of their work. They also mentioned the importance of horizontal and vertical alignment so that teachers deeply understood the

standards they taught, how those standards related to one another, and how the standards developed into higher level learning over the years. One necessary adjustment suggested that teachers and administrators work to create a Pre-K-16 system instead of the current Kindergarten-12 system. This goal would result in universities adequately knowing how to prepare their students for teaching, and they would be able to help schools as teachers transitioned to the new standards (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013, p. 71).

Because of Kentucky's early implementation, they also put a professional development plan into effect, called the Common Core Implementation Plan. The plan developed a timeline for professional development and strategic tasks as well as clearly specifying the participants and their responsibilities. They then held monthly implementation meetings with teachers and administrators based on region and met in groups based on grade level. The groups planned six weeks of lessons at a time, analyzed standards, and developed assessments, planned from instruction, and learned from each other. After each session, the participants returned to their schools and acted as resources for the other teachers (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, p. 161-3).

A final study revealed that teachers actually knew best what professional development they needed. The research involved a survey asking teachers what they thought they needed in terms of education, and the teachers' responses reflected areas in which students performed poorly in major state assessments, indicating that teachers understood what they most needed to improve on to help their students (Bostic & Matney, 2013, p. 17). The article pointed out that teachers were the primary source for students, so they must have the tools necessary to best teach them. Teacher completed any number of tasks, including facilitating discourse and instructional norms, while

simultaneously understanding the content of their classes, the pedagogy for those content areas, and the possible outcomes for their students.

Section 4: Opposition to Common Core State Standards

While schools determined what implementation and professional development worked best, many people and groups voiced persistent and vehement opposition to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). With such a strong opposition, exploring the varying schools of thought and exploring many of the reasons given for rivaling the standards proved to be vital in understanding the CCSS.

Paul Peterson and Peter Kaplan's article, "Despite Common Core, States Still Lack Common Standards" (2013), explained a few common arguments made against the adoption of the CCSS from the point of view of states that already adopted the standards and still voiced their hesitation. Alabama and Indiana, both of whom adopted the standards in 2010, threatening to withdraw their support, calling the CCSS a federal government imposition on local school districts, citing the fact that all of the states except for Ohio that attained waivers from No Child Left Behind did so by adopting the CCSS (Peterson & Kaplan, 2013, para. 5). States like Massachusetts and California worried that their standards already did more than the CCSS did and so saw little benefit for their students academically. Teacher unions voiced displeasure with the high stakes often attached to student testing and worried about a negative impact on teachers (Peterson & Kaplan, 2013, para. 6).

Another objection, one prevalent in the related literature, questioned that the research basis for the CCSS might be flawed. In "The Emperor is Still Looking for His Clothes," Christopher Tienken (2012) argued strongly against the standards, calling them

a "social experiment undertaken on children," and quoting someone who referred to them as the "Stalinization of children" (cited by Tienkin, 2012, para. 1). He then detailed two of the research studies used for the basis of the CCSS-ELA and explained why they should not be considered. David Conley and his colleagues conducted both studies (Tienken, 2012, para. 4).

The first study, "Reaching the Goal: The Applicability and Importance of the Common Core State Standards to College and Career Readiness," asked college professors to rate the importance of specific CCSS in relation to their specific content areas to show that the CCSS were college and career ready. Tienken argued that the design of the survey had several flaws, first being that the professors did not have a set of standards to act as a control. They compared the CCSS against themselves, not compared to any other standards, meaning the results did not reveal anything in reality. Secondly, he objected that college professors should not necessarily have the final say, as professors typically specialized in one specific discipline, not a variety of multiple disciplines. He called this study a "return to narrow subject-centered curriculum versus transfer of knowledge through interdisciplinary and problem-based curriculum" (Tienken, 2012, para. 7).

The next study, "Lining Up: The Relationship between the Common Core State Standards and Five Sets of Comparison Standards" compared the scope of the CCSS to five other sets of academic standards: California, Massachusetts, Texas, Knowledge and Skills for University Success, and International Baccalaureate (IB). The results stated that all of the standards aligned to the CCSS except for the IB standards. Tienken argued that such results either meant that the states' standards varied less than the CCSS asserted,

meaning there did not need to be a set of common standards, or it meant that the standards were not college ready, since they aligned to the state standards, typically lower, but not to IB, designed specifically for college readiness (Tienken, 2012, para. 8-9).

Tieknen raised two further objections. First, he called the research a conflict of interest in that the CCSS needed research about them prior to their release and that the people conducting research should not be part of the creation of the standards. Neither of these scenarios took place in the case of the CCSS (Tieknen, 2012, para. 10). Finally, he argued that a common curriculum hurts the country, citing that over a hundred years ago, when a common set of standards was in place, fewer than five percent of students graduated high school and even fewer went to college (Tienken, 2012, para. 11).

A study conducted by Hiebert and Mesmer (2013) questioned the importance of raising text complexity, one of the fundamental shifts in the CCSS. The standards argued that reading textbooks declined in difficulty and sophistication during the twentieth century, causing a decline in college readiness. This claim centered on two studies that looked at sentence length and vocabulary levels, but this article separately evaluated the text complexity of third and sixth grade textbooks from 1905 to 2004 to determine whether text complexity actually *did* decline over time. They analyzed the texts based on the same two types of lexical difficulty as the CCSS. The first type of text complexity, lexical difficulty, measured the degree of sophistication of the words in a sentence and was determined by the text's LEX and word frequency (WFB). The second type of text complexity included both readability and mean sentence length.

The results of the study revealed that for third grade texts, the LEX and WFB was highest in the 200s, while the first decade of the 1900s was highest in readability and sentence length, followed immediately by the 2000s. For sixth grade texts, the LEX and WFB were highest in the early twentieth century but rose over time starting at the 1950s, ending with the 2000s. For readability and sentence length of sixth grade texts, the 1920s were highest and the rest were similar levels. This study indicated that the text complexity did not decreased; some of the levels were lower than they were a century ago, but the 2000s had some of the highest levels of recent decades, making it hard to claim that the current situation was a result of declining standards. The authors argued that the real problem with literacy in modern America was that students were not reading on level, not the simplicity of their texts. Raising standards would only exacerbate that reality. They also cautioned that quantitative date, such as text complexity, could not determine how difficult texts *should* be for students, only how hard they were; text complexity comprised only a part of a well-rounded reading program.

Another common complaint referred not to the research behind the standards but rather what the standards themselves emphasized. "The Common Core Text Exemplars— A Worthy New Canon or Not?" (2013) reasoned that Appendix B, which provided a list of suggested texts for use in the CCSS-ELA, actually significantly harmed literacy instruction in classrooms. The article appreciated the inclusion of informational texts, though questioned that some of the suggested ones were out of date (Moss, 2013, p. 50).

The article began with an argument that the text exemplars would replace the literary canon in schools. While the author understood that the books as possible texts not required for implementation, she contended that it would be easy for teachers to

misunderstand the intention of Appendix B and think that they must incorporate the books. Teachers short on time could rely on the texts provided to make their lesson planning easier, and some districts required the texts to be incorporated under the assumption that assessments would test for the exemplar. As third party curriculum developers began making their curricula, they often included the texts rather than finding texts outside of the list to broaden the range of books in a classroom (Moss, 2013, p. 48).

Moss went on to criticize the number of outdated texts recommended. Contemporary literature only recently became widely accepted in the classroom, and many teachers who supported that movement feared that the widespread adoption of the CCSS would lose all progress made. She then raised a tri-fold argument against historical classics. First, she wrote that older classics may no longer appeal to children and young adults, as they had a harder time relating to the style of writing and ways of life expressed. Second, classics explored traditional themes no longer relevant in a modern world, making them not only difficult to relate to but also so unimportant that students should not attempt to relate. Finally, she stated that the list underrepresented multicultural literature and authors with varied backgrounds, another step backwards. Even newer classics were not represented, including recent Newbery Medal winners (Moss, 2013, p. 49-50).

Despite Moss' concerns about Appendix B, Mike Shmoker and Carol Jago (2013) maintained that the ancillary documents and appendices were actually the strengths of the CCSS and that the standards were the weakest part. They considered that the standards confusing and poorly written. Overall, they feared that the standards diverted from authentic literacy instruction and strongly opposed the separation of the CCSS-ELA

standards into separate skills (Schmoker & Jago, 2013, p. 59). By way of a solution, they suggested that the CCSS reduce the number of standards to focus on the most important concepts only (Schmoker & Jago, 2013, p. 62).

Section 5: History of Academic Standards in Catholic Schools

Because this study sought to address the role of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Catholic education, the study must create the context of Catholic education at the time of the research. This section outlined a brief overview of the development and maintenance of Catholic schooling in the United States over time.

Timothy Walsh (2001) wrote at the turn of the century about the traits that contributed to the continuation of Catholic education in America, beginning with its inception in the 1800s. He proposed that three traits persisted since that time, leading to modern Catholic education and causing religious schools to persist through many difficult times. He identified those three traits as tenacity, adaptability, and community.

The Catholic school system displayed its tenacity from the very beginning, when English missionaries brought the Catholic faith to the forefront in a Protestant majority. The missionaries struggled against that Protestant majority from their outset and Catholicism did not become a long-term establishment in America until the 1820s. Catholics' dedication to religious education and willingness to resist the objections largely explained why Catholicism persisted in the United States into the twenty-first century (Walsh, 2001, p. 326).

Catholic schools' constant changes in response to the changes in public education demonstrated their adaptability. Early in Catholic education, schools maintained a strict rigidity in order to establish themselves separately from the public schools, but that

decision forced parents to choose between a religious education and academic success.
Over time, the Catholic schools realized the importance of a balanced education, meaning
they began using academic standards similar to those in public schools (Walsh, 2001, p.
356). Though this article was written before the release of the CCSS, that adaptability
could again be seen in Catholic dioceses adopting the standards as a measure to improve
their academic strength.

Finally, Catholic schools always relied on their surrounding community. The
Catholics in a neighborhood traditionally built and then sustained the school, and, while
that changed to a degree over time, Catholics still placed a high importance on
community at the time of this study. Throughout the last few centuries, Catholic schools
also drew their teachers from the community, contrasting with public schools whose
teachers often lived far away and disengaged from the area of the school. Because
Catholic schools developed their own curriculum, they often catered to the specific
personality and needs of their community (Walsh, 2001, p. 356).

Another study, "Responding to the Demands of Assessment and Evaluation,"
observed assessment in Catholic schools by looking at assessment in public schools, the
effect that those assessments had on Catholic schools, and how Catholic schools
historically responded. In the 2010s, evaluation and assessment in public school very
much tied to the accountability systems dictated by the state as well as by No Child Left
Behind (NCLB) legislation. Assessments brought with them the heightened authority of
student assessment results for decision-making. Those assessments in turn decided
classroom instruction and student grouping, providing accountability for standards and

benchmarks, and high stakes decisions, such as a teacher's salary or whether to close a school (Kallemeyn, 2009, p. 499).

Accountability was not always a primary focus of the educational field, both in Catholic and public education. The 1990s brought with them a move toward evidence-based decisions. Starting in the medical field, an appreciation for research soon moved into the education field in an attempt to bridge the gap between research and practice. Without an accountable system, teachers and principals found it impossible to gauge their success. While the Great Society Movement of the 1960s led to additional funding for many social programs, education found itself outside of that umbrella and found itself evaluated based on measurable standards and benchmarks in order to justify and prioritize budget cuts. Federally, two acts moved America towards accountability in education: *Improving America's School Act of 1994* and *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. Every state required either a state assessment or a local assessment to be the primary way of reporting success by 2000. In 33 of those states, schools faced consequences for their schools' performances (Kallemeyn, 2009, p. 499-500).

The incorporation of 2001's NCLB changed evaluation and assessment from a mere consideration to a driving force in public education. NCLB required academic content standards for math and reading, which would be tested in grades three through eight for at least 95% of all students. Certain standards must be met yearly (Adequate Yearly Progress or AYP) so that by 2014 all schools would meet the standards (Kallemeyn, 2009, p. 500-501).

Private schools by nature did not have to abide by state or national legislation in general. However, many private schools took money from the state for certain programs,

especially for funding of special needs programs. Any Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA) funding required schools to evaluate students using state

assessments, meaning they also needed the state standards. In 2007, 80% of Catholic

schools used funding from NCLB for at least one student, meaning they used state

assessments to some extent. On a larger scale, any charter schools and voucher programs,

due to the new laws, found themselves connected to the requirements of the states in a

way they had not been previously. Even when changes in public schools did not directly

impact Catholic schools, the shift in practice permeated the whole field of education until

Catholic schools discovered the importance of research-based assessment and

accountability in order to stay competitive and gain effectiveness (Kallemeyn, 2009, p.

501).

Outside of the changes in public education, Catholic schools discovered an

increasingly urgent need to increase their accountability. Enrollment declined

significantly since the 1960s due to a loss of both money and people to support the

schools. Many of the closing schools were in urban areas. These drastic losses caused the

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to issue a statement in 2005 and

the Notre Dame Task Force for Education to publish a report in 2006, both emphasizing

the imperative to re-dedicate their commitment to Catholic education. The Notre Dame

Task Force cited the lack of academic excellence in Catholic schools as the main catalyst

for their eventual decline. The Task Force committed themselves to solving the problems

through several steps, largely based on researching the most effective standards and

benchmarks for student success and developing their own standards and benchmarks.

One of the Task Force's suggestions included using the public funds that could be applied

to Catholic schools, such as the IDEA money or school choice programs that brought in the aspect of a demand for standardized student assessment (Kallemeyn, 2009, p. 502-503).

Three trends of the last fifty years contributed to the adoption of standards in Catholic schools. The first shift came as a part of the Great Society Movement of the 1960s, alongside the War on Poverty. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), precursor to NCLB, was passed in 1960 as part of the War on Poverty and placed student assessment as a vital definer of program evaluation. ESEA did not directly affect Catholic schools, but the idea of accountability in schools started at that time, and Catholic schools soon began moving towards research. *Catholic Schools in Action*, conducted between 1962 and 1966, marked the first large-scale study of Catholic schools, primarily examining staffing and enrollment. The Inventory of Catholic School Outcomes, also part of *Catholic Schools in Action*, began assessing students' understanding of and attitudes toward religious principles (Kallemeyn, 2009, p. 505).

A 1949 publication laid the groundwork for the second trend, self-evaluations for school improvement. The Department of Education at the Catholic University of America's *Criteria for the Evaluation of Catholic Elementary Schools* presented standards that addressed philosophy and objectives of Catholic elementary school education, school plant, administration and supervision, curriculum and courses of study, materials of instruction, and teaching and learning activities. Specific checklists measured each area in order to best inform Catholic administrators and educators. The Criteria focused on challenging age-old assumptions, bringing forth new ideas, and reevaluating priorities. The Criteria hoped to teach educators something new about what a successful

and effective Catholic school looked like. In 1965, the Criteria were revised to be more complete in every area. By the mid-1980s, the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) produced several efforts to reform Catholic education. The themes to come out of these publications approached self-assessments through awareness, assessment, and analysis. The assessment should start with a scientific, rational basis and be interpreted from there. Strategic planning became a part of evaluation and assessment with the 1999 publication of *Validating the Vision: An Assessment Protocol for Mission Effectiveness, Institutional Accreditation, and Strategic Planning in Catholic High Schools*. Self-evaluations drew in the community, relying on parent and community member participation to assess the school, eventually bringing the local area together around the schools (Kallemeyn, 2009, p. 505-507).

Student assessments, the third trend, dated back to the turn of the twentieth century, when E. L. Thorndike developed standardized tests in reading, language arts, math, spelling, and drawing. Since then, standardized tests helped to delineate groups of students based on ability and allowed for students to pass from one level of schooling to another, such as the SAT in college preparedness. Assessments also monitored student progress, allowed teachers to effectively plan instruction, and diagnosed learning disabilities. School accountability became the primary focus of assessments following these trends. Catholic schools did not have a set number of tests required for students, but they used many of the typical ones, including the SAT and ACT. They rarely used state assessments, but often employed tests like the ITBS or AP exams. Catholic schools developed faith-based assessments over the years as well, starting in the 1960s and continuing through today. Most schools used the Assessment of Catholic Religious

Education (ACRE), given once in elementary school, once in middle school, and once in high school (Kallemeyn, 2009, p. 507-509).

Lorraine Ozar's article, "National Catholic School Standards: An Accountable Vision of Catholic Schools for Our Times" (2012) detailed a recent and important development that took place at a meeting of the Catholic Higher Education Collaborative, a group of ten Catholic colleges and universities, in 2009. They came together and discussed the importance of adding credibility to existing Catholic schools, as well as how to improve the overall impression of and support for the idea of Catholic education. Their meetings produced a set of standards that determined what defined a Catholic school for formation purposes and improvement purposes, a document entitled *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (NSBCS). Defining characteristics, standards, and benchmarks comprised the NSBCS, all of which came from Church teachings, best practice, and proven success from previous programs. The creation of the NSBCS met five goals: generating an unambiguous branding of Catholic education, framing public policy and advocacy efforts, developing characteristics helpful for accreditation processes, deepening professional development and research, and creating long term respect for Catholic education within communities (Ozar, 2012, p. 7).

The first section produced from the meeting, the defining characteristics, was based on the writings of Pope Benedict XVI and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The characteristics must be immediately evident in any Catholic school and should be incorporated pervasively throughout the entire school. The nine characteristics for successful Catholic schools were: centered in the person of Jesus

Christ, contributing to the evangelizing mission of the Church, distinguished by excellence, committed to educating the whole child, steeped in a Catholic worldview, sustained by Gospel witness, shaped by communion and community, accessible to all students, and established by the expressed authority of the bishop (Ozar, 2012, p. 7-8). These nine characteristics tied in the importance of a grounding in Scripture and Church Tradition while also emphasizing the importance of academic excellence, as well as incorporating community and accessibility, signifying a combination of an excellence of education and a strong theological basis.

The second product, the standards for Catholic school success, was 13 standards divided into the four areas of Mission and Catholic Identity, Governance and Leadership, Academic Excellence, and Operational Vitality. They outlined the "policies, programs, structures, and processes" presented in all "mission-driven, program-effective, well-managed, and responsibly governed Catholic schools" (Ozar, 2012, p. 8). The standards acted similarly to the CCSS in that they were broader expectations that must be met for overall success but that did not specify the day-to-day occurrences. Like the defining characteristics, the standards addressed both theological depth and principles necessary for the running of a business and emphasis on raising academic standards. The third main product, the eighty benchmarks, further broke down the standards, similar to how a curriculum breaks down academic standards. The benchmarks acted as attainable and measurable goals referred to as a compass rather than a how-to manual (Ozar, 2012, p. 8).

Ozar clarified that the NSBCS should not be used as a system for accreditation, as schools still implementing and took control of the standards individually, personalizing them to their own situations. A national committee of Catholic educators did create a

rubric, however, that schools could use if they wanted a format. She also recommended

partnering Catholic universities and colleges with Catholic elementary and high schools

to further develop a strong Catholic educational system.

The NSBCS reevaluated the definition of Catholic Identity. The article argued

that for many years, Catholic Identity was measured by how many religious items could

be seen in a school hallway but that such a measurement no longer proved adequate and

must be reconsidered. The document placed emphasis on the same categories of the

standards (Mission and Catholic Identity, Governance and Leadership, Academic

Excellence, and Operational Vitality), looking for depth in Catholic education. The article

stressed that religiosity did not lose its place in the schools, but the understanding of what

made a Catholic school a true testament to the mission of the Church must widen to

incorporate many other important aspects.

Section 6: Catholic Schools and Common Core State Standards

At the time of this study, Catholic schools had only begun to interact with the

Common Core State Standards (CCSS), resulting in minimal amounts of information

about their relationship. Over a hundred dioceses adopted the standards, but the

implications of those adoptions remained elusive in research. Some people expressed

their understandings, however, so this section examined the groundwork laid as schools

began to enter the phase of implementation.

On May 31, 2013, the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA)

released a statement regarding the role and place of the CCSS in Catholic education,

expressing its support of the standards. The Position Statement began by addressing

misconceptions about the CCSS, explaining that the standards were a state-led initiative,

not a federal mandate, and that neither No Child Left Behind nor Race to the Top required the implementation of the CCSS. Specifically relevant to Catholic education, the states voluntarily chose to adopt standards, and those choice was especially optional for all dioceses, archdioceses, or private schools. They also did not impose any mandates on Catholic schools if the schools adopted the standards (NCEA, 2013, para. 2).

The Position Statement then summarized the benefits of the CCSS and why the NCEA chose to support them. The standards shifted the focus of academic standards to "creativity, critical and analytical thinking and application to curriculum content" (NCEA, 2013, para. 5). They also talked about the difference between standards and curriculum, mentioning that the CCSS raised most states' standards but that each school still controlled their own curriculum.

Finally, the NCEA announced the creation of a committee dedicated to connecting the CCSS to Catholic education: the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative (CCCII). The CCCII aimed to provide resources to schools to make implementation easier while continuing to emphasize the culture and context of a Catholic community. They explained their primary goal to be suffusing the standards with faith, principles, values, and social justice (NCEA, 2013, para. 8).

Contrasting with the NCEA's Position Statement, on October 16, 2013, a law professor at the University of Notre Dame sent a letter to the United States Council of Catholic Bishops denouncing the Common Core State Standards in Catholic education; 132 scholars from many backgrounds and institutions signed the letter. The letter asked the over one hundred dioceses that adopted the standards to change their decision and that the remaining dioceses be urged against adoption (Strauss, 2013, para. 1).

The arguments represented many different rationales, starting with an assertion that the standards were approved too quickly before adequate research could be done, without consideration for the effect it would have on the character and curriculum of today's Catholic schools (Bradley, 2013, para. 3).

They also argued against the CCSS' claim that the standards would raise academic standards. While the standards placed importance on readying students for careers and college, the letter maintained that the standards prepared students for community-college-level studies at best, and not authentic college work. While they recognized that community colleges were not a problematic goal, they argued that the standards were too low without an appreciation for a holistic literature-based curriculum. Essentially, they called standards a "bottom-line, pragmatic approach to education" that disregarded the central goals of education: "to grow in the virtues necessary to know, love, and serve the Lord, to mature into a responsible, flourishing adult, and to contribute as a citizen to the process of responsible democratic self-government." According to the letter, the aims of CCSS undermined Catholic education and did a disservice to the children being taught (Bradley, 2013, para. 9-10).

The authors especially objected to the shift towards informational texts in conjunction with traditional literature. They denounced the view of literacy as a "critical" skill set, saying that this sacrificed students' opportunities to connect with literature and truly experience the texts. Reading became a "servile" activity through the CCSS. They also posited that when the yet-undeveloped science standards would assume metaphysical laws to be innately incompatible with the spiritual world, and that the social studies

standards would promote the moral relativism that permeated culture (Bradley, 2013, para. 17).

While recognizing that adopting the standards did not require anyone to follow through with any of the individual standards and that there was no requirement for any state or diocese even to adopt CCSS, the authors worried that financial and political pressures, as well as misinformation, would lead many schools to take on the standards without realizing their eventual negative impact (Bradley, 2013, para.20).

Section 7: Related Factors

Due to the current climate in relation to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the implementation of the standards could change. States debated whether to maintain their commitment to the CCSS even after they began implementing them. The letter from the 132 professors to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) was just recently sent, so the extent of its impact was not yet fully realized. As new developments regarding the standards continued to progress, the research study evolved.

Many parties questioned the CCSS until after they saw the type and effect of assessment, and since many schools were still in their first and second years, influenced this study.

Section 8: Summary

The review of the literature began with an analysis of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which branched into several areas of study, including the background of the standards, implementation of the standards in schools, professional development in regards to the CCSS, and the arguments of those in opposition of adoption of the

standards. The discussion also involved the historical trends of Catholic academic standards and examined the relationship between Catholic education and the CCSS.

At present, little research examined the CCSS in Catholic education. Numerous studies addressed the standards in public schools, but few questioned the similarities and differences between the adoption of the CCSS in pubic and Catholic schools. Because most individual school districts or schools did not have the choice to adopt the CCSS, Catholic schools uniquely approached the standards in that each building and diocese made the choice independently. To discover what influenced those decisions provided valuable insights on what the CCSS meant in Catholic schools. As a result of the review of the literature, a research question and several subquestions were stated and further explored in Chapter 3, the Methodology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Section 1: Review of the Research Question

The research question asked, *What factors lead to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for Catholic schools, and how do Catholic schools implement their academic standards?* The first part examined why a Catholic diocese or archdiocese would choose to adopt the Common Core State Standards, while the second part asked what the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) looks like when put into place in a Catholic school system.

Section 2: Setting

The study took place in a medium-sized, comprehensive Catholic university of approximately 8,000 undergraduate students. The student who conducted the research was an undergraduate student in the Teacher Education department. The research

question carried twofold significance for the teacher education population and held particular importance for those in Catholic education.

First, this study contributed to a growing understanding of the Common Core State Standards, new standards in various stages of implementation in 43 of the 50 states. Because of the timeliness of the standards, this research informed teachers of what implementation looked like and provided examples of what steps were most formative for the interviewed archdiocese that implemented the CCSS. This study examined what happened in school settings and how that could be used to advise schools and districts in similar situations.

The study held significance for the teacher education population as it contributed research about Catholic education, a field traditionally under-researched. Research about the Common Core State Standards was particularly sparse in the field of Catholic education. As the field of Catholic education increased its dedication to research-based excellence, a research study that examined the implementation of a new and wide-sweeping set of standards helped other dioceses as they worked to make an informed decision about which academic standards might work best for them.

Section 3: Research Design

The data came from a qualitative study based on six interviews of experts in the teacher education and educational administration fields. Data analysis of the interview transcripts revealed important and prominent themes.

The study's strengths included the ability to learn the thoughts of a varied group of educational professionals with different backgrounds, experiences, and views. The

information gained from the interviews went to a depth beyond that of numbers, and it stemmed primarily from firsthand experience.

The small number of participants limited the study somewhat. The experiences of educators in other dioceses may have varied widely, and so this study represented only two archdioceses rather than Catholic education as a whole. The data, however, still provided informative and valuable results and therefore revealed a substantial amount of information about Catholic education, the Common Core State Standards, and the relationship of the two.

Section 4: Subject Selection

A total of six interviews involved subjects from two separate archdioceses. Archdiocese A, a medium-sized archdiocese in the Midwest, was selected because it used the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as an adaptation for their academic standards. They created a curriculum based on the CCSS and infused the standards with Catholic identity and implemented that curriculum in their schools. Archdiocese B, a large Southern archdiocese, examined the CCSS, looked at their own academic standards in relation to the CCSS, and decided not to adopt the CCSS. Both archdioceses catered to diverse populations, including schools in rural, suburban, and urban settings. By choosing an archdiocese that adapted the CCSS and an archdiocese that chose not to adopt the CCSS, the study provided information about the factors that went into such a decision as well as learned what measures considered for the implementation of the CCSS as opposed to what was useful for a diocese or archdiocese that elected not to use the CCSS.

From each archdiocese, one elementary classroom teacher, one school administrator (principal or assistant principal), and one administrator in the

superintendent's office interviewed. The subjects' personal information was removed.

Their names were not recorded on any of the transcripts or information related to the

thesis so as to protect confidentiality. They were referred to by pseudonyms based on the

archdiocese in which they work. Table 1 outlines how each participant was referred to

during this study. Archdiocese A interviews were conducted face-to-face, while

participants in Archdiocese B interviewed over the phone as the distance prohibited a

face-to-face meeting. The audio of every interview was recorded for accuracy when

transcribing the interview.

Table 1

Archdiocese A (adapted CCSS)	Archdiocese B
Teacher A	Teacher B
Principal A	Principal B
Superintendent A	Superintendent B

Teacher A taught fourth grade in a Catholic school that offered small class sizes

from age 3 up to eighth grade in a suburban setting. She was selected based on previous

work with the university through professional development for the CCSS. Teacher A's

experience provided a context to be able to communicate a comprehensive understanding

of using the CCSS in the classroom as well as the role of the standards on Catholic

education.

Principal A worked an assistant principal for a Catholic suburban school offering

a PK-8 program. Principal A has also participated in professional development about the

CCSS in Catholic schools and therefore documented experiences implementing the CCSS

in her school.

Superintendent A acted as the Director for Curriculum and Assessment for Archdiocese A. A mutual contact asked Superintendent A if she would be willing to be part of the study so as to open up the study to an administrative point of view.

Teacher B taught second grade at a suburban school that ranged from kindergarten to eighth grade. She was recommended to the study through a connection with one of Teacher B's co-workers because of Teacher B's familiarity with academic standards and continuing research on the CCSS.

Principal B was the principal of a preschool to eighth grade school in an under-privileged area of a suburb. A previously established relationship prompted her inclusion in the study, further strengthened by her promotion of Catholic education and experience in teaching and administrating in Catholic schools.

Superintendent B worked as the superintendent of Archdiocese B, a role which also includes development of academic standards. Her connection with Principal B garnered her interest in the study, and she agreed to explain the current relationship of Archdiocese B and the CCSS.

Section 5: Design of the Study

The initial step for this study was to conduct the review of the literature. First a variety of scholarly research based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) was examined. Because of the recent publication of the CCSS, most of the research was in a philosophical phase rather than a practical or applied stage, but research documented the development of the standards as well as ideas for how to transition to the CCSS. Much of the research explored the major shifts from most existing academic standards to the

CCSS. The shifts in elementary English Language Arts standards made up the focus of the literature.

Next, the researcher read what studies existed about academic standards in Catholic education after discovering that no research of any kind currently existed about the CCSS in Catholic schools. The history of Catholic education played an important role in understanding the effect of the CCSS, and recent conferences developed a deeper understanding of what primary shifts were occurring in Catholic education.

After reading as much research as possible on the CCSS, the researcher identified the primary themes that continuously presented. Those themes in research about the CCSS included: the basics of the CCSS, implementation of the CCSS, professional development, and opposition toward the standards. For Catholic education, the themes were primarily either the history of Catholic education or the interaction between Catholics and the CCSS.

After completing the review of the literature in Chapter 2, the researcher began developing the questions for interview based on the sections in the literature review. Next, the researcher met with advisors to consult on whom should be interviewed, and the researcher contacted each person to set up a meeting time. The interviews happened over two months and were then transcribed. After being transcribed, each interview was read and coded for important themes and common points made between interviews.

Section 6: Data Collection

Three of the interviews happened in person with audio recordings of the interviews captured for later transcribing. The other three were conducted over the phone with audio also recorded.

The questions first developed in order to cover each section in the review of the literature, but they were asked in a slightly different way for each participant, dependent upon their role in their diocese and their diocese's implementation of the CCSS. For a full list of the questions, see Appendix B. The first question in each interview asked the participant to describe the archdiocese's or the school's relationship with the CCSS. Next, they were asked what prompted the archdiocese's decision regarding the standards, whether they had chosen to adopt or not to adopt the standards. Although the superintendents of each archdiocese would be the ones qualified to most accurately and completely answer these questions, asking it of the principals and teachers gained an idea of how much understanding passed from the superintendents' offices to the individual school buildings. While it was important to learn of the superintendents' reasons and thoughts, it was equally important to learn the impressions of the principals and teachers in relation to that of the superintendents.

Next, the participants described the role of the superintendent, the role of the principal, and the role of the teachers in implementing the archdiocese's academic standards, whether those standards came from the CCSS or not. This question also helped to understand the levels of communication and dissemination among the different levels of administration, but it also acted to gather information about what professional development and tools were most useful for implementing academic standards in these Catholic schools.

Another question asked whether the archdiocese or school faced any opposition regarding the use of the CCSS. This question may appear only relevant for those using the CCSS, but even the archdiocese that did not use the CCSS heard substantial amounts

of concern about whether the students were taught with Common Core standards. Learning what the archdioceses and schools did to educate parents and the public could prove useful to other districts and schools hoping to inform parents about the decision to use or not to use the CCSS.

The next question differed based on the archdiocese. Participants from Archdiocese A, which used an adapted form of the CCSS, answered whether they thought the CCSS provided an important part of Catholic education. Similarly, participants from Archdiocese B, which did not use any form of the CCSS, answered what they see as the role of academic standards in Catholic education. These questions were designed to reflect how academic standards were used in Catholic education, a question that tied into the section of the literature review about the history of academic standards in Catholic education. The research indicated that it was not until recent years that academic standards were a central part of Catholic schools, so this question inquired whether the participants saw academic standards as vital in modern schools.

Finally, the participants advised a school or (arch)diocese in the process of trying to decide whether to adopt the CCSS. Many dioceses had the option to adopt the CCSS and would benefit from guidance of those who already made a decision. Whether they chose to adopt or not to adopt the CCSS, both sets of participants offered their input on what factors proved most important and what steps they took to make the decision.

Section 7: Ethical Issues

When setting up the design of the study, confidentiality stayed at the forefront of the design due to the sensitive nature of the material. Though this study did not offer a quality statement about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) nor provided any type

of opinion, many people felt very strongly about the subject, and the protection of the participants' integrity was the first priority.

In order to ensure that the participants avoided any risk, the study went through the exemption process of the University of Dayton's Institutional Review Board (IRB), which explored whether any participants were at risk or harmed from the study before any research could actually be conducted. After the IRB exemption was granted, each participant signed a consent form that was approved by the IRB committee, outlining the expectations and involvement of the interviews so that each participant was fully aware of the situation and willingly agreed to be involved. The names of all participants, schools, and archdioceses were removed from the interviews and transcripts.

Section 8: Summary of Chapter 3

In conclusion, the design of this study was a qualitative study based on the interviews of six experts in the field of Catholic education, designed to gain an understanding of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and their relationship with Catholic education. Two teachers, two school administrators, and two archdiocesan administrators participated in the study by agreeing to be interviewed. The interview questions derived from the literature review, designed to develop a better understanding of each section. Those sections included: an overview of the CCSS, the implementation of and professional development for the standards, opposition to the standards, the history of academic standards in Catholic education, and finally the relationship between the CCSS and Catholic education.

Chapter 4: Results—Analysis and Discussion of the Data

Section 1: Introduction

This study examined the way that Catholic schools responded to the Common

Core State Standards (CCSS). Whether ultimately choosing to use the CCSS or not, each

diocese used certain criteria to make that choice. This study examined the reasons of two

specific archdioceses as they decided whether or not to adopt the CCSS. The study also

explored how the archdioceses understood academic standards, how they implemented

their standards, and how they responded to the complexities of their decision.

Part of the study included the experiences of a superintendent, principal, and a

teacher in two archdioceses. Archdiocese A adapted the CCSS to be used in their schools,

while Archdiocese B elected not to include any of the CCSS in their academic standards.

Choosing two dioceses allows the research to compare two separate experiences. After

each archdiocese articulated their impressions of the CCSS and their relationship with

them, however, it became clear that Archdiocese B's implementation was actually very

similar to that of Archdiocese A. This chapter utilizes data to illustrate that though the

two archdioceses made different choices, they actually walked a similar path to reach that

decision and used similar methods to implement their different academic standards.

At the time of the interview (March 2014), Archdiocese A used the newly

developed ELA standards in kindergarten through fifth grade. The ELA standards for

sixth through eighth grades existed but would not be implemented until the following

school year (2014-2015). While the standards primarily taught the CCSS, Superintendent

A infused the standards with Catholic identity.

In 2006, Superintendent B began the process to design the academic standards

used by Archdiocese B at the time of this study. For each subject, twelve to fifteen

teachers, principals, and curriculum coordinators sat on a committee to write and revise

the curriculum within that subject. Starting in 2006, a committee developed standards and curriculum, two subjects each year for five years. Every year since their creation, the committee re-reviewed two or three subjects so that they completely reviewed all of the subjects in a five-year cycle. The review examined assessments, student achievement, national benchmarks, and the National Standards for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools.

In this chapter, the educators from Archdiocese A were referred to as Superintendent A, Principal A, and Teacher A, while the educators from Archdiocese B were referred to as Superintendent B, Principal B, and Teacher B.

Section 2: Research Question

This study answered the following research question: *What factors lead to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for Catholic schools, and how do Catholic schools implement the standards*? This chapter examined how the interviews answered this question in conjunction with what the existing research contributed to the understanding.

Section 3: Results

The interviews of the six participants provided the data for this study. The interviews were read and coded by the overarching themes that have emerged. Each theme corresponded to its own section in this chapter.

Careful data analysis identified the following three themes:

1. Both archdioceses developed the content of their academic standards similarly.

2. Both archdioceses approached the implementation of their standards in a similar manner, including use of professional development, choosing textbooks, responding to opposition, and concerns about the CCSS.

3. While both archdioceses mentioned Catholic identity as an important element of writing their academic standards, neither archdiocese referenced Catholic identity when discussing implementation.

Similar Standards

The first evident theme reflected in the data identified that both Archdiocese A and Archdiocese B used standards of a similar nature. Despite one diocese using the CCSS and one diocese not using them, each archdiocese's descriptions of the standards they used, as well as how they developed those standards, had more in common than they did apart.

Archdiocese A, originally chosen because it incorporated the CCSS into its academic standards and curriculum, opted to *adapt* the standards rather than *adopt* them. Superintendent A explained that they examined the standards used by the state, standards made up of the CCSS, and they chose to use "what we believe are solid standards from that" (Superintendent A, personal communication, March 26, 2014).

When Archdiocese B developed their academic standards, their committees started with high school and asked what they wanted their graduates to know. They then worked backwards, asking what eleventh graders need to know about each subject, then tenth graders, until they reached kindergarten. This strategy of aligning standards vertically aligned with the one that the CCSS developers also followed. The experience of teachers in those areas as well as the recommendations of the appropriate national

standards led to those decisions. Principal B also mentioned that the committees made sure to examine any data coming back from their students, in order to determine the weakest areas of the curriculum.

Archdiocese A chose to adapt the CCSS for a few reasons. Both Superintendent A and Principal A noted that the archdiocese boasted a long history of academic success in its students, and so the archdiocese needed to stay current with changes in education to remain competitive and high achieving. Essentially, Archdiocese A chose to incorporate the CCSS because they saw them as strong academic standards. Superintendent A lauded the CCSS's continuation of standards over multiple years, allowing teachers to focus on several key components of instruction rather than trying to teach a multitude of subjects and concepts at once.

Archdiocese B made the decision not to adopt or adapt the standards with a similar understanding of academic excellence that Archdiocese A did. Archdiocese B compared its own standards to the CCSS soon after their first publication, and the archdiocese lined up each of its standards to those in the CCSS to determine if it met every standard and to examine the similarities and differences. Superintendent B described the CCSS as the bare minimum for Archdiocese B's standards. In creating their academic standards and curriculum, the team who created the standards consistently looked at national standards from organizations like the National Council for Teachers of English as well as the CCSS, or whatever academic standards the state used. Teacher B described the process Archdiocese B went through in examining the CCSS, explaining that they went through every single standard in the CCSS and aligned it to a standard in Archdiocese B's set of academic standards. If a standard was taught in a different grade,

the committee explored the reasons for that difference and made changes if necessary. In general, Teacher B concluded that the standards contained general similarities but that Archdiocese B's standards ended up being over all more demanding.

Archdiocese A's connection to their state acted as the key impetus for their adaptation of the CCSS. They go through accreditation by the state and therefore needed to meet whatever standards the state mandated. Because Archdiocese B went through a different accreditation process and was thusly not required to use the state's standards, their decision could be made without the impact of the state's requirements, making their decision process different from that of Archdiocese A. Again, their decision-making process incorporated the same factors aside from this distinct difference of circumstance.

Archdiocese A also opted into optional programs from the state, further requiring their adherence to the state's academic standards, while Archdiocese B did not. Thirty percent of the elementary students in Archdiocese A received vouchers from the state to attend Catholic schools, according to Superintendent A, and another portion of students received a scholarship from the state for children with disabilities to attend private schools. All of those students were then evaluated by the state tests, essentially requiring the schools to adopt the standards even if they adapted them to their own needs.

Both dioceses understood that the standards needed to be addressed to some extent and could not fully be left alone, though this ultimately led to a different decision about how to incorporate the CCSS. Even if Archdiocese A was not required to use the CCSS because of funding, Superintendent A expressed that they would eventually need to incorporate the CCSS to some extent because of the influence the standards would have on assessments like the ACT and SAT. In order to remain academically competitive

with students nationally, Archdiocese A would need to teach the skills necessary for success on national achievement tests. The educators interviewed in Archdiocese B also referred to this prevalence of the CCSS, understanding that their students would inevitably be faced with tests and instruction materials rooted in the CCSS. Instead of using the CCSS, however, Archdiocese B chose to use their standards because their standards were close enough to the CCSS to be successful.

Teacher A's comments on the adoption of the CCSS reinforced Archdiocese B's feelings that the standards are not wholly new information. While some shifts appeared in the new standards, she said that most of the curriculum and standards were familiar to those in Catholic schools. She considered the change a good slide over to the new standards rather than a teaching of entirely new concepts, while Archdiocese B's educators felt that they already covered the topics enough without using the new standards.

While not using the standards entirely, Superintendent B still identified several positive aspects of the CCSS. The CCSS incorporated components that she always saw as vital to quality education. Higher order thinking skills are important at every stage of education through the CCSS, and Superintendent B appreciated that the new standards afforded students the opportunities "to explore, to analyze, to compare, to contrast," as well as learning flexibility in problem solving and thinking. The CCSS minimized the importance of rote memory in favor of learning the process of thinking, which Superintendent B said Archdiocese B has done for several years prior to the interview, to the benefit of the students.

Archdioceses A and B did not use the same academic standards. Archdiocese A used the CCSS, adapted for what made sense in their schools, and Archdiocese B did not include any specific standards from the CCSS into their academic standards. Despite these indisputable differences, the archdioceses still used incredibly similar standards. They both used nationally researched and supported standards as a starting point, which they then evaluated in comparison to their existing standards and made changes based on what their students needed and what the research indicated. They even based their reasons on the same logic: Striving for academic success, paired with the need to satisfy state requirements for their accreditation, led each archdiocese to their decisions. Because Archdiocese A preferred state accreditation, and Archdiocese B chose to be accredited from another source, their decisions ultimately differed, but in general, the process and product of the dioceses paralleled each other.

Similar Implementation

Another significant finding of the research was that the standards were not only written and developed alike but also implemented similarly, including the archdioceses' professional development, response to opposition, selection of textbooks, and concerns about the CCSS.

Superintendent A explained that implementation Archdiocese A almost entirely left up to the principals. The superintendent developed and disseminated the standards, and then schools decided for themselves what worked best for their situations. They created opportunities for professional development but did not get specifically involved in the implementation on the school level. Teacher B said that, like Archdiocese A, in her

archdiocese, schools covered the standards in whatever way made the most sense for them.

Textbooks

Though textbooks were becoming less and less central to lesson plans, teachers still used them as central tools as they came up with ideas for lessons and found resources to use in instruction. While not initially a separate question, most of the participants mentioned the effect of the CCSS on textbooks, indicating it played an important role in implementation for both dioceses.

The school at which Teacher A taught needed a new reading basal at the same time that they began implementing the CCSS, so they selected a textbook created specifically to facilitate the use of the new standards. They decided to use *Journeys*, a book produced by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. *Journeys* taught through groups based on ability levels, and it also incorporated both fiction and non-fiction texts. Each fiction story preceded four or five non-fiction pieces that related to the fiction piece, a set up that reinforced the emphases of the CCSS-ELA standards and differed from the typical reading basal prior to the new standards. Principal B explained that, because the textbook companies wanted to meet the needs of the most states, most new textbooks mentioned the CCSS. In her school, "we have materials that are Common Core. Our math is Common Core, some of the math materials are, some of the materials for reading are Common Core. But we are driven by our curriculum." Like teachers in Archdiocese A, educators in Archdiocese B used materials created for the CCSS, as all major manufacturers focused on the CCSS as the standards.

Concerns

Principal A, though using the CCSS, voiced some concerns about the effect that the standards might have on textbook development. She stated, "What worries me, though, is that the textbook manufacturers will only make books that are in line with the Common Core and so then you really are sort of driving just a certain way of teaching." She said that in the past, a textbook study was driven by what the students needed most with less of a focus on the standards, and she worried that the textbooks no longer focused on serving the individual needs of students, that they instead focused too much on simply meeting the CCSS-ELA. She explained the fear that Common Core textbooks may end up like past educational trends, worrying that in several years educational theory will swing away from the CCSS and in another direction. Principal B had similar concerns about Common Core textbooks, even though her diocese is not using the CCSS. Like Principal A, Principal B worried that students suffered because textbook companies showed more concern about rushing to incorporate the CCSS so that they veered away from the most effective methods of instruction. These concerns impacted educators regardless of the standards they use.

Professional Development

As indicated by the research in Chapter 2, one of the most important parts of implementing the CCSS was providing enough professional development for teachers and principals, so all participants were asked about the professional development that they offered or did throughout the year. Both archdioceses prioritized professional development as the best way to prepare teachers to ensure that all students were able to meet the academic standards for their grade.

Both archdioceses did professional development on an archdiocesan level as well as professional development within the schools. Their professional development plans included education for teachers as well as communication between teachers, principals, and superintendents.

Every second week of June, Archdiocese A provided a week of professional development for the entire archdiocese. The week changed depending on what new things were being introduced and what needed the most attention. For example, following this interview, the professional development week addressed Algebra I and Geometry with high school teachers because their standards went into effect for the first time during the following school year. This was the only reported professional development at the archdiocesan level for Archdiocese A.

Archdiocese B conducted at least one in-service for all of the educators in the archdiocese each year. Every other year, they held an additional in-service. In these meetings, teachers met with one another across vertical and horizontal lines, both meeting with teachers from the same grade level and with teachers based on subjects. For example, a third grade teacher might meet with high school teachers of several subjects to understand what concepts are vital to be understood at third grade and to see how high school developed them. Major focuses of the archdiocesan in-services included how to use data to improve instruction, using formal data as well as data gleaned from formative assessments, project-based learning, and any other artifacts of learning.

Both Principal A and Teacher A attended monthly meetings with two professors at a nearby university where they learned about strategies for implementing the CCSS-ELA. They then returned to their schools and relayed these ideas to their coworkers.

Teacher A brought the ideas back and shared them through a monthly faculty meeting. Principal A's school communicated what she learned through curriculum meetings with a department four times a year, while grade level teachers also met once a week. Schools in Archdiocese A decided for themselves the number of times and type of communication for these school professional development meetings.

Much of the professional development in Archdiocese B came at the school level, both by learning from other teachers and from bringing outside experts to meetings with the faculty. Principal B emphasized that if a teacher is going to teach abstract ideas, many of which are at the core of the CCSS, then they need extensive professional development about how to go about it. Even though Archdiocese B did not adopt the CCSS, they used many CCSS materials, so they focused on strengthening those skills. They discussed concepts such as why it might be important to teach through problem solving rather than requiring rote memorization. Principal B identified another aspect of professional development to be determining the most appropriate assessments for standards, including formative, summative, and journal writing. She labeled effective professional development as especially important for novice teachers and veteran teachers.

Principal B also supported mentoring and coaching for teachers. Rather than dedicating time to workshops or in-services, a teacher who is struggling with a particular skill, such as teaching fractions, might partner with a teacher who successfully taught it and talk about how the struggling teacher did it and what might be done better. Then the first teacher implemented what they discussed, came back, and they evaluated how it went and what could be done better the next time. Principal B called this the best kind of professional development, as it is both ongoing and embedded.

Teacher B's school did professional development based on specific subjects at a time. She gave the example that their last professional development meeting was about Math, so a specialist from the area came in to give a presentation and to provide ideas for specific teaching strategies, hands on activities, and interactive computer websites. These meetings existed so that teachers came away with ideas that could be implemented in the classroom immediately.

Like Teacher B's meetings led by an outside professional, Principal A and Teacher A went into further depth about what their monthly meetings addressed with the two experts from the nearby university. Teachers and administrators from schools in the area attended the meetings, and they began by reading *Pathways to the Common Core* to ground the discussion in a better understanding by everyone. The two leaders did not necessarily advocate the CCSS, as they were more interested in helping educators understand the CCSS than they were interested in promoting or denouncing it. From the meetings, the participants returned to their schools and shared ideas they discussed, including videos that showed the standards in practice so that teachers saw what the finished product looked like. The meetings taught that the changes in standards reached across all content areas, as a change in education as a whole rather than just a change in Language Arts.

Opposition

As dioceses and states adopted the CCSS, many people voiced their opposition to the changes, so the interview questions asked the participants about their understandings of people's opposition. The questions addressed two portions:

1. What causes the opposition?

2. How do you go about handling the opposition?

The answers to these questions indicated the experiences and opinions of these educators. Participants from both archdioceses answered the questions, because they all heard opposition, even if it is not directed at the school or diocese directly, and educators from both dioceses responded similarly. Even though Archdiocese B is not using the CCSS, parents see the CCSS logo on workbooks and textbooks that go home and they ask teachers and principals why they are being used if the diocese is not using the CCSS.

Two themes of opposition consistently arose from the data analysis. First, the participants reported that parents worried that the CCSS set the bar too low for their children, that their children would not be challenged enough by the CCSS; second, parents expressed equal concerns that the standards challenged their students too much, that the standards jumped higher than the previous standards too abruptly. In the same vein as worrying the CCSS would be too low, many parents argued that private schools' academic standards should be more rigorous than those of public schools and therefore expressed unhappiness with the CCSS.

Aside from specific oppositions, the data revealed that a large contributor to the opposition came from a combination of a lack of understanding about the nature of the CCSS and of political beliefs. Superintendent A mentioned that almost every time she asked an upset parent why they disliked the CCSS, the parent lamented of the standards' low expectations. When Superintendent A asked the parent to point to a low standard,, the parent realized he had never actually read the standards. Teacher A explained that many of the political objections came from a desire for the government to be uninvolved

in education, a further indicator of the misunderstandings about the CCSS, as the federal government did not directly create the standards or enforce them.

While many factors caused the opposition to the CCSS, each diocese responded to the opposition in similar ways. The archdioceses' responses took three different forms. First, superintendents met with the educators and made sure that they understood the CCSS fully. Second, schools educated parents through meetings and publications. Finally, if the first two strategies did not make a parent feel better about the standards, the superintendents of each archdiocese met with the parents personally.

Both archdioceses identified that superintendents should use professional development to teach principals and teachers how to understand and communicate about the standards. Superintendent A specifically mentioned that she talked with principals at their monthly meeting about how to help parents understand the standards and makes sure that principals understand them themselves so that they can explain them sufficiently.

Participants in each archdiocese explained how they worked to educate the parents in their schools. Principal A's school was working on a document at the time of the interview to go home in the weekly communication to parents to give them more information about the CCSS, hoping to correct some misconceptions. Archdiocese B did not get as much opposition because their standards did not use the CCSS directly, but they still educated parents on what the CCSS meant and how they related to the archdiocese and the students. For example, Principal B's school was planning at the time of the interview to do a parent meeting "just to talk about what Common Core *is*, how does it fit here, and what we are doing here."

When the previous methods did not succeed in assuaging the concerns of a family or parent, both archdioceses directed parents to contact the superintendent directly to talk about the standards. The superintendent's office in Archdiocese A met with families who objected to the CCSS, where they showed them the standards and helped parents understand what they meant for the education of their child, as well as showing how they integrated the Bible into their standards. Superintendent A recommended showing the curriculum to parents so that they saw what their children actually learned rather than hearing news stories that may not have reflected what is actual happened. At Teacher A's school, the principal met with some families upset about the change. Generally, however, parents were told to take up their objections with the superintendent's office, as they made the decisions and the schools had little control of it.

Implementation of academic standards spanned many areas of consideration. Both Archdiocese A and Archdiocese B had to face concerns about the quick shift to using the CCSS in states across the country and the effect that had on textbooks and other classroom materials. They responded with similar levels of professional development, though that professional development had also been a part of their archdioceses since before the CCSS were developed. Both dioceses heard strong opposition to any interaction with the CCSS, and so they then educated parents on the role that the CCSS played in their children's lives. Ultimately, while the archdioceses used different standards, their implementation of those standards in a country that primarily uses the CCSS were alike in many ways.

Catholic Identity

The final main finding from the interviews came not from what was said but from what educators from both archdioceses did *not* say. This study discovered the role that Catholic identity played in the adoption and implementation of standards, especially in regards to the CCSS. While superintendents, principals, and teachers spoke about their standards, they mentioned Catholic identity in how the standards were developed, but they never mentioned Catholic identity in the *implementation* of the standards.

Because Catholic schools could set their own curriculum, Archdiocese A took the standards from the CCSS and infused them with Catholic identity. By doing so, they then taught the same content that the public schools did, but they then also taught the components of Catholicism and faith formation of importance to them.

In Archdiocese A, the team who adapted the curriculum then worked to infuse a part of Catholic identity into every academic standard possible. This effort led to a connection of every single English Language Arts (ELA) standard to a component of Catholic identity, while Math standards did not.

Superintendent A offered an example of the Catholic identity connection to the CCSS-ELA. In second grade, one of the units taught about caring for pets, so a homework assignment asked students to write a narrative on St. Francis of Assisi and his love of animals. The archdiocese used this approach in an effort to integrate the religious instruction, according to Superintendent A.

In Archdiocese B, both Superintendent B and Principal B spoke about the importance of faith formation and religious education in Catholic schools. They explained that faith formation was one of the primary pieces that removed them from

public education. Principal B labeled Catholic identity as the main goal of Catholic education.

While those who created the standards identified Catholic identity as the core of Catholic education, Catholic identity, religious education, and faith formation did not come up in any part of the discussion about implementation. This did not mean that religious instruction never appeared in implementation, but it was not something that these six educators addressed while answering questions about topics of professional development, how they ensured that students understood topics, or any of the opposition to the standards.

Section 4: Discussion

This study sought to answer the question, *What factors lead to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for Catholic schools, and how do Catholic schools implement the standards?* In order to fully understand the answers to this question, one must both examine the review of the literature, outlined in Chapter 2, as well as the results of interviews with Catholic educators, explained above. The question naturally split into two sections. First, why did a diocese or archdiocese decide to use the CCSS in or as their academic standards? Second, how did Catholic schools utilize academic standards, whether those standards were the CCSS or not?

Two parts answered the first question about why Catholic schools would use the CCSS. Both dioceses based their decision about adopting or adapting the CCSS on their belief that Catholic schools must uphold academic excellence in every way possible. They used academic standards to bring their students the highest standards within a realm of achievability. Secondly, they made their decision based on what they needed for

accreditation. Archdiocese A chose state accreditation, meaning it was most efficient for them to use the same academic standards as the state's public schools, while Archdiocese B accreditation came through another program, which allowed them the freedom to choose and create their own standards.

In this particular study, the diocese that adapted the CCSS (Archdiocese A) did so because they felt that they had no other choice. Being accredited by the state, they were required to use the same academic standards as the public schools. Because their state government adopted the CCSS, the archdiocese also did so. L. Kallemeyn mentioned this factor in her article "Responding to the demands of assessment and evaluation in Catholic education" (2009), where she wrote about Catholic schools' movement to use the same standards as the state due to receiving state funding for programs and resources. She also wrote about the shift in the 1990s towards research-based practices in Catholic education, something that many dioceses began to emphasize in order to remain rigorous in their standards of education.

For dioceses whose standards were not explicitly mandated by the state's standards, the decision to use the CCSS became more complicated. A document published in 2012, titled the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBCS), recommended ways that Catholic schools should evaluate themselves to ensure that they actually communicated the word of God while staying a viable institution that educated children effectively. Schools and dioceses reviewed these standards when trying to decide whether or not to adopt the CCSS. Archdiocese B also detailed the decision making process they went through when the CCSS were first released, comparing their existing academic standards to those in the

CCSS. Because their standards aligned to the CCSS so closely, they deemed it unnecessary to change the system to adhere to the CCSS. That decision could have succeeded in other dioceses or may have had an entirely different outcome, but the process they went through to come to their conclusion might be helpful for other dioceses.

The second part of the question asked about how Catholic schools implemented the CCSS. The research, while not specifically about the CCSS in *Catholic* schools, presented several ideas about implementation in the classroom. Most of the research was philosophical rather than practical, so the examples of implementation were not extensive, but several articles explained some ways to implement the CCSS. Part of the question asked if Catholic schools implementation the CCSS in a similar way that public schools implemented them or if they implemented them in a drastically different way. In general, the implementation of the Catholic schools aligned closely to that in the research. A 2013 article by J. Simpson emphasized the importance of preparing teachers extensively for how to understand and integrate the CCSS-ELA, a topic of great importance in the interviews with the Catholic educators. Both archdioceses strongly committed to preparing teachers as much as possible so that they understood how to use their academic standards to promote learning. M. McLaughlin's article (2013) presented another idea for implementation, using group reading to help students understand close reading of non-fiction, as well as emphasis by the teachers in Archdiocese A and Archdiocese B, again indicating that implementation followed many of the same pathways in Catholic schools as they did in public schools.

Catholic identity represented a distinct difference between the public and Catholic schools in that Catholic schools intentionally integrated Catholic identity into every component of their standards and curriculum. Public schools did not need to make as many changes to the CCSS for them to be appropriate for their students, but Catholic schools needed to be certain that faith formation drove their education.

Section 5: Summary of Chapter 4

This study investigated several dimensions related to the way that Catholic schools used the CCSS and how the Catholic schools implemented the standards, to answer the question: *What factors lead to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for Catholic schools, and how do Catholic schools implement the standards?*. The interviews explained whether each archdiocese used the CCSS, and then examined how they implemented their academic standards, including the role of textbooks and professional development. Participants described how the superintendent, principals, and teachers contributed to the use of academic standards in their archdiocese, and then they talked about why people opposed the CCSS and how their archdiocese responded to that opposition. Finally, they explained the value that they placed on using academic standards in Catholic education.

Three essential findings emerged from the data analysis. First, both Archdiocese A and Archdiocese B operated using standards of a similar nature, despite using standards of a different source. Second, both dioceses have approached implementation of their academic standards similarly, in terms of textbooks, professional development, responding to opposition, and their concerns about the CCSS. Finally, both dioceses intentionally discussed their incorporation of Catholic identity into their standards, but

the Catholic identity was not a part of the discussion of implementation. The research about Catholic education and the CCSS was somewhat inconclusive on how Catholic schools would respond to the new standards, so the results of the interviews did not necessarily contradict anything but informed the subject more.

While Archdiocese A used the CCSS and Archdiocese B did not use the CCSS, they viewed the standards similarly. All of the participants identified many strengths in the CCSS but also held reservations about the standards' feasibility, concerned that they may become a fad that would pass shortly They also all expressed a similar importance about using rigorous academic standards to keep Catholic education competitive with public education. They used many of the same teaching strategies for students,, and the standards in Archdiocese B reflected many of the same principles that the CCSS emphasized.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Section 1: Significance of the Study

This study examined several components independently and their effect on each other. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the history of academic standards in Catholic education were separately researched at length, primarily in Chapter 2's Review of the Literature. Because no research examining the two topics in one study existed at the time of this study, there was no research about the combined fields. The Methodology, which consisted of a series of interviews with educators in archdioceses across the United States, moved from two separate topics towards a combined look at the CCSS in conjunction with Catholic education, particularly learning about how these

academic standards can and are being used in Catholic schools at many levels of the hierarchy.

The unique nature of the research in part resulted in its significance. As stated above, at the time this study began, no research was published about how Catholic schools used the CCSS or even how they *could* be used. The interviews done in this study canvassed a wide variety of educators at various levels, in different situations, to see a broad understanding of how Catholic educators understood and implemented the CCSS.

Part of the unique relationship between the CCSS and Catholic schools was that Catholic schools typically had some say in whether they adopted the CCSS or not. While in a public school, the principal and teachers received a set of standards decided on by the state government and mandated across the state, private schools, including Catholic schools, did not necessarily have to follow the decisions of the state government. As the CCSS gained popularity and became increasingly common across the country, many Catholic dioceses and schools questioned whether the standards were appropriate for their schools and asked how to go about making that decision. Hearing the experiences of these educators in dioceses that ultimately made different decisions could be useful for dioceses trying to make that decision, as well as being able to provide examples and advice for dioceses that have made the decision and needed to figure out how to go about educating with or without the CCSS.

This study was also relevant because not all dioceses got the choice about whether to adopt the CCSS or not. Dioceses such as Archdiocese A may have felt that they had to use the state's standards because their accreditation came through the state and they then abided by the same standards. Because Catholic schools differed from public schools,

private school educators needed an idea of how the CCSS affected them differently than they did public schools. For schools who did not have a choice about the standards but that must use them, this study provided a helpful insight on how to maintain Catholic identity and using the CCSS in the best possible way.

Section 2: Summary of the Study

While this study reported many things, one of the most significant findings was that both archdioceses responded to the CCSS in a similar manner. While Archdiocese A adapted the CCSS for their curriculum and Archdiocese B utilized different academic standards, both archdioceses examined the standards at great length and compared them to the standards they used at the time. Over all, they found that the standards reflected what they were already doing. After this examination, Archdiocese A decided to use the CCSS infused with Catholic identity throughout, and Archdiocese B decided it was not necessary to adapt or adopt the standards because their academic standards already aligned so closely to what the CCSS included.

Another similarity between Archdiocese A and Archdiocese B was that they primarily implemented their standards in the same way, regardless of whether they implemented the CCSS or their own standards. Educators in both archdioceses spoke about the importance of frequent and intentional professional development, and the teachers spoke about that professional development as a resource for how to incorporate standards in the classroom.

Both archdioceses also heard the opposition to the CCSS regardless of whether they adopted the standards or not. Archdiocese B utilized materials geared toward the CCSS, which confused and upset parents, so both dioceses faced how to help parents

understand the CCSS and how it affects their children. The educators also agreed on the importance of academic standards in Catholic education, explaining that rigorous academic standards remained vital to the success of Catholic schools.

Some differences identified more in the set up of the archdioceses themselves than in their relationship with their academic standards. For example, the superintendent's office and a school's principal played a clearer role in the implementation of academic standards in Archdiocese B than they did in Archdiocese A. Over all, however, most of the educators interviewed expressed similar views and similar experiences related to the academic standards of their archdiocese.

Section 3: Conclusions

Several somewhat surprising findings emerged from the interviews, counter to the initial research. Primarily, many more similarities existed than made sense with cursory thinking. Both dioceses approached their standards with substantial similarities, and the different sources of the standards in each archdiocese ultimately produced more similarities than differences. Finally, the Catholic identity piece that distinguished these archdioceses from a public district only rarely appeared in the interviews and data analysis.

Archdiocese A and Archdiocese B operated using different academic standards for their curriculum. While Archdiocese A adapted the CCSS for their standards, Archdiocese B explored the CCSS and decided that they contributed too little to their curriculum to be worth using. Despite those divergent decisions, the interviews revealed that the two archdioceses followed similar pathways to implement their standards and teach their students with a standard of excellence. Both archdioceses stressed the

importance of professional development. All six participants mentioned meetings of the entire archdiocese, where educators met with one another to review and develop understanding of the standards they used. Five of the participants also talked about professional development sessions within their schools, in which the educators focused on their standards in more depth. Though not asked about textbooks, both teachers and both principals spoke about the role that textbooks played in the implementation of their academic standards. Even in Archdiocese B, educators recognized the impact of the CCSS in selecting materials for their students, another commonality between the archdioceses. Both archdioceses planned education sessions for parents about the CCSS, regardless of whether they actually taught the CCSS or not. Essentially, Archdiocese B's decision not to use the CCSS did not change what the archdiocese did to implement their standards nor what they did to respond to the CCSS.

One concept to emerge from the interviews was the idea that the CCSS did not have to be bad standards for a diocese to decide to use another set of standards. The educators in Archdiocese B voiced numerous appreciations for the strengths of the CCSS; some of the participants in Archdiocese B even said more positive things about the CCSS than participants in Archdiocese A identified. Archdiocese B did not choose to use their existing standards because they thought the CCSS were bad standards or even worse than what they were using. When they went through the CCSS, they compared them to the archdiocese's existing standards and they felt that their standards addressed the themes in the CCSS so they did not see a need to transition to the new standards. Archdiocese A changed to the CCSS primarily because their state changed to the CCSS, but the archdiocese still had the option to choose other standards if they felt strongly enough to

do so. The conclusion made from this finding was that the CCSS, while a set of strong academic standards, may not be the only academic standards that could possibly be effective for a school or for students; at the same time, the CCSS would not ruin a school by themselves. The approach of both dioceses indicated that both decisions could be made while still prioritizing excellence in education.

At the onset of the study, part of the goal sought to find out how Catholic schools approached the CCSS in a way specific to Catholic schools, information unable to be gleaned from research in public schools. Over all, the data from the interviews revealed little specificity to Catholic education in day-to-day practice. The superintendent in Archdiocese A talked explained that she infused the CCSS with Catholic identity before the diocese implemented the standards, but the principal and teacher in Archdiocese A did not talk about how Catholic identity impacted instruction. Both superintendents and both principals explained that Catholic identity must walk hand in hand with academic excellence, but none of them pointed out specifics about how religion interacted with or depended upon academic standards. Superintendent A gave examples of how the CCSS-based standards could be taught through religion and how religion could be taught through the standards, but neither the principal nor the teacher in that diocese identified any implementation techniques that reflected an integration of religion in the classroom. The educators identified faith formation as a right that parents have when they send their children to Catholic schools, and thereby labeled it as a priority when creating standards, but five of the six educators neglected to mention any specific relationships between the standards and religion. According to the data, therefore, Catholic identity played a part

when developing the academic standards in the two archdioceses, but it arose much less when addressing the implementation of those standards.

Section 4: Implications

This study provided information for Catholic educators in several different situations. For dioceses that forced to adopt the CCSS, the study showed how an archdiocese responded to that situation and recommended specific ways to implement the standards. For dioceses unsure about their opinion on and relationship with the CCSS, Archdiocese B outlined suggestions for how to decide if the standards benefitted a diocese. Aside from the CCSS, the study talked about ways that Catholic schools stayed competitive with the constant changes in education. It showed how dioceses responded to new educational research and the value that they placed on having strong educational practices. Catholic schools and dioceses can sometimes seem isolated from one another, as they do not have the same regional and national ties that public schools have, and this study acted as a resource to learn from other Catholic educators around the country, offering suggestions for how to use understand and implement academic resources.

Schools across the country, both public and private, struggled with whether the CCSS represented the most appropriate standards for their schools. The politicization of the standards overtook much of the rational debate about the benefits and weaknesses of the CCSS, so educators and parents often wondered what they should actually believe about the standards. The primary result of this research indicated that the CCSS did not actually differ greatly from other academic standards. Teachers instructed using similar methods whether they taught from the CCSS or not, and specifically Catholic schools did not change their approach significantly either way. This information was important for

educators to understand as they agonized over whether or not to adopt the CCSS and how to approach the CCSS if their state, district, or diocese made the decision for them.

Section 5: Recommendations for Further Research

Because many states still reviewed or recently implemented the CCSS, the research that can be done on the subject of the CCSS and Catholic education in many areas. This study represented just a small piece in the information that could be learned about and from studying the role of the CCSS in Catholic schools.

This study happened shortly after the CCSS emerged, so a further study might examine how the implementation and attitudes changed over time. A case study could follow one specific school or classroom, looking specifically at how a teacher or school used the CCSS and the changes they made as a result. A case study could also examine a whole diocese or archdiocese to see on a slightly larger scale how the standards were implemented.

Part of the study briefly mentioned the relationships between superintendents, principals, and teachers, but those relationships were not explored in depth, as it was not a query of this study. A study to examine the communication between the three levels might be beneficial so that dioceses ensured that they successfully communicate goals throughout the whole diocese. Some friction sometimes exists between administration levels and teachers, and a study could explore that more extensively to see how to help administrators and teachers communicate their needs and goals.

The purpose of this study was not to compare the CCSS in Catholic schools to the CCSS in public schools, though it arose to a small degree. A study could more

specifically target that comparison to see what resources a Catholic school might need that a public school might not need.

Part of this study simply researched about Catholic education, as Catholic education often conducts less research than other educational areas. Catholic educators placed more importance on research in recent years, but a strong research base takes a long time and substantial resources, so this study contributes a small part to the movement toward grounding Catholic education in research.

Section 6: Summary of Chapter 5

This study answered the question, *What factors lead to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for Catholic schools, and how do Catholic schools implement the standards?* For the most part, the schools in this study decided whether to use the CCSS based on whether they needed the standards for their accreditation, though more complex motivations extended beyond that factor. Catholic schools primarily implemented academic standards by educating teachers and staying current with educational research. The specifics of implementation varied, but all participants in this study emphasized the importance of professional development. Without helping teachers understand what they needed to teach and providing ideas for how to do it in the most effective ways, academic standards cannot be expected to succeed, especially ones such as the CCSS that changed the expectations dramatically.

Significant research can be done about the CCSS and Catholic education, so this study acts as just part of that wide spectrum. Studies like this one helped to provide information to other schools who hoped to improve themselves. This study specifically helped dioceses and schools see examples of archdioceses that grappled with the CCSS

by explaining how they implemented their standards and how they viewed the CCSS. Considering the importance of the CCSS for education, Catholic educators needed to know how the standards related to them specifically. As implementation of the CCSS progresses in Catholic education, hopefully research will continue to learn about what they look like and how they can help other Catholic schools.

Appendix A: Works Cited

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Appendix B: Interview Questions

Questions for Archdiocese A:

1) What is [the archdiocese's, your school's] current relationship with the Common

   Core State Standards?

2) What factors caused the archdiocese to adopt the Common Core State Standards?

3) What [is, are] the role(s) of the superintendent, the principals, and the teachers in

   facilitating the implementation of the standards?

4) Have you faced any opposition to using the CCSS? How have you (or how *would*

   you) responded to it?

5) [Why do, Do] you think the CCSS are important for Catholic education?

6) What advice would you give to schools and dioceses trying to decide whether to

   adopt the CCSS?

Questions for Archdiocese B:

1) What is [the archdiocese's, your school's] current relationship with the Common

   Core State Standards? Can you describe your academic standards?

a) For the superintendent only: How (and when) were your current academic standards developed?

2) What prompted the decision not to adopt the standards?

3) What would have to change in order for the Archdiocese of Atlanta to adopt the CCSS?

4) What [is, are] the role(s) of the superintendent, the principals, and the teachers in facilitating the implementation of the standards?

5) Have you experienced any opposition to using the CCSS in schools?

6) What do you consider the role of academic standards to be in Catholic education?

7) What advice would you give to schools and dioceses trying to decide whether to adopt the CCSS?