

January 2014

Since its inception in 1973, Worthington Christian Schools has been committed to providing students a course of study that is unique in both its rigor and its biblical worldview. Developing such a curriculum is the challenge of any Christian school. God has created a complex universe, and so the universe of ideas is vast, containing both truth and error throughout all of the disciplines. Sorting out all of these ideas and boiling them down to what ought to comprise a rigorous K-12 education is no simple task. A school may legitimately choose to answer the curriculum question in any number of ways.

This curriculum development process is one of the most important things the school does. In order to do it well, it must remain free to determine its own direction, choosing to include those ideas and concepts it believes to be vital to a comprehensive education and within a biblical framework. Part of the process is to remain conversant with the larger educational community while holding on to its distinctive nature as a Christian school.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been adopted by the state of Ohio and integrated into the state's model curriculum. These standards are a product of the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Although no school in Ohio, public or private, is required to adopt any of the contents standards in CCSS as part of its curriculum, every student in Ohio must pass a state graduation assessment in order to receive a diploma. Our students have been required for years to take the state graduation assessment and have done extremely well. Our scores have placed us among the top schools in the area and the state. Beginning next year, the graduation assessments will be aligned with CCSS. In addition, The College Board will begin aligning its college entrance exams (AP and SAT) with CCSS. WCS does not have a choice in this matter, but it does not expect this to have a significant effect on our students' ability to meet the requirements of the assessment. While the school will maintain the independence of its course of study, it also needs to assure that its students will be thoroughly prepared for their graduation and college entrance assessments. As such, WCS takes the following positions on CCSS:

- WCS will maintain the independence to design its own courses of study. The school will not be adopting CCSS or any other prescribed set of standards. However, it will continue to select the best practices, ideas, and standards from across many platforms to form our own instructional course of study. As we always have, WCS will engage in the process of ongoing curriculum development so that it offers rigorous, college-preparatory instruction designed to lead students in the biblical pursuit of truth across all academic disciplines. Some of the content standards in the schools' courses of study may be very similar to CCSS, not because WCS has adopted CCSS, but because those standards are generally accepted best practices.

- Any set of content standards may be implemented in a multitude of ways. For example, ten schools may take the same set of content standards and use them in instruction so vastly different that it would be almost impossible to discern that they were derived from the same content standards. Although it is not the schools' plan to adopt CCSS, it would be quite possible to adopt it and still teach it rigorously and from a biblical perspective. It is worth noting that content standards are not prescriptive on how content is taught and only serve as a benchmark, not a ceiling, for what students should know and be able to do. For example, a content standard that expects students to compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style could be taught using a variety of texts with a variety of themes. Those themes could be presented in any number of ways by the teacher. The mission of WCS is to develop and implement content standards that form a biblical worldview in its students. As a side note, the vast majority of criticism of CCSS has been over recommended readings or model lesson plans, neither of which are required and are left to the discretion of the local district. The same content standards could be taught in a way that is not controversial.
- WCS believes its content standards currently meet or exceed those of CCSS. Those areas of its courses of study which currently align with CCSS do so because they are simply best practices that the school adopts. If there is alignment at any point in the future, it will be because the school believes the standards to be best practices, and not because they are part of CCSS. Such alignment will arise within the schools' freedom to do it and because the school believes it will benefit its students, not because it is under compulsion by an outside agency.

The controversy surrounding CCSS has been heated enough that the school believes it is important to set before parents its perspective on the standards. WCS will maintain full authority over the drafting and implementation of its courses of study. It will continue to engage in the same process of review that it would be doing even if CCSS did not exist. As it engages in that process, its commitment is to choose standards from the universe of ideas, created by God, that it believes a young person who is earnestly seeking truth across the academic disciplines ought to be learning.