

CORE KNOWLEDGE AT ST VINCENT SCHOOL

A word from Fr Clark

* * * * *

CK AT ST VINCENT SCHOOL

St Vincent's made a limited commitment to CK in the 2003-04 school year with the adoption of the remarkably rich CK Social Studies texts. That positive experience, later coupled with seven years of intermittent in-service, moved the faculty to look to a progressively broader adoption of the CK curriculum and philosophy. (For the past several years, our website has identified St Vincent's as a CK school, and many of our families are enrolled here for that very reason.)

As a result of these successful first steps, the WASC Accrediting Commission in Spring 2004 commended the school heartily and urged it to move forward to fully implement CK across the entire curriculum. This has occurred gradually without adverse tuition consequences, bringing the school in Fall 2009 to a decision to formally adopt the CK curriculum in its entirety.

This process of full adoption is being *temporarily facilitated* by Mr Bob Hamm, a retired former principal of a CK school in the diocese. (His main role is to serve as a resource person for our teachers, as they dig deeper into their curriculum.)

WHAT EXACTLY IS CK?

Core Knowledge (CK) is a carefully integrated curriculum which incorporates *all major subject areas* including music and the visual arts. CK draws upon the research of E D Hirsch, whose books are well known to most parents, eg - *What Your Third Grader Needs to Know*.

CK fulfills all the requirements of the diocesan and state frameworks, but it is much richer and more focused in content, and it achieves a far more thorough integration of knowledge across the various subject areas.

CORE KNOWLEDGE AT ST VINCENT SCHOOL

A word from Fr Clark

* * * * *

The CK curriculum was *developed to help teachers guarantee:*

- 1. that every student will achieve *solid competence in fundamental skills* (reading, writing and math);**
- 2. that every student will be taught a rich sequence of information and ideas that will bring him/her to a solid level of cultural literacy, and thus lay the *informational foundation for future success* in high school and college;**
- 3. that the careful sequence of instruction is not derailed by trivia, fads, or narrow personal interests. It *gives teachers clear benchmarks (checkpoints)*, which assure that all the essentials are taught at each grade level so that no harmful gaps are left in students' learning;**
- 4. that *the various subject areas are integrated* with one another, so that students' knowledge is not fragmented but connected and more easily recalled for future use.**

WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT TO SEE NEXT?

In many areas we're already where we need to be, for example, using the Saxon Math series which is highly recommended by the CK Foundation, and using CK's own Social Studies texts (we're already in our seventh year).

Our teachers are currently reviewing CK's recommended replacements for the outdated reading texts at Grades 1-3, and for purchasing Science texts for Grades 4 and 5, a long-standing gap. Both acquisitions will be completed by year's end.

Across the board, you should gradually expect to see more integration and connectedness between subject areas. (For example, when the science teacher teaches about creation and evolution, the religion teacher will explain how that fits with creation stories of Genesis.)

CORE KNOWLEDGE AT ST VINCENT SCHOOL

A word from Fr Clark

* * * * *

Throughout our curriculum, we'll be working harder at integrating the parts and pieces of knowledge, instead of leaving them fragmented and thus less available for recall and use. (For example, Music and Art instruction won't be free-floating, but connected to the historical times and places in which they originated.)

At the same time, we'll be trying to help our students expand their intellectual curiosity and their higher thinking skills, leading them to understanding and "knowledge as power." Our school rejects the kind of mindless rote memorization, which may be useful for passing tests but leaves no lasting knowledge, because it has shallow roots.

THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCE

St Vincent's commitment to the CK curriculum is a stable, interesting, motivational curriculum that provides:

1. excellent preparation (literacy) for high school entrance exams
2. excellent knowledge base (cultural literacy) for succeeding in high school and beyond
3. well-developed thinking and problem solving skills, and
4. the essential life-skill and pleasure of learning how to learn on one's own.

A GOOD INVESTMENT for parents interested in learning more about CK is the ***CORE KNOWLEDGE SEQUENCE*** which provides the complete instructional sequence for all subject areas K-8.

This and other CK resources are readily available through the CK Foundation website: www.coreknowledge.org and other internet sites found under "core knowledge."