



Common Core Standards & Rancho Christian Schools

Our Relationship to Standards

Whether looking at state, national, or common core standards, RCS has always sought to meet and exceed standards. However, along with any discussion of standards one must also address the philosophical underpinnings to the development of those standards. As an institution, we view the Common Core Standards as a reaction (in many cases an overreaction) to schools graduating students who do not demonstrate high levels of problem solving and critical thinking skills. In an attempt to rectify this, the Common Core Standards were developed.

Too Much of a Good Thing is a Bad Thing

While it is important to graduate articulate, critically thinking, problem solving students (our *ESLRs* are based upon these concepts), it is also important that they have a base of knowledge that they have acquired along the way to build upon and use as they are analyzing and synthesizing information. It seems as if the “drill and kill” years of teaching to the test have been replaced with lowering the bar on rote memorization in favor of analyzing and thinking critically with smaller amounts of information committed to memory. We can say that the common core is guilty of the proverbial pendulum swing, where less is committed to memory and more is required in terms of long answers and explaining one’s answers. Therefore, analysis without sufficient base knowledge can create students who are dependent upon the use of outside sources to form conclusions, while those with a solid foundation will be able to solve problems more independently. Too much of a good thing – problem solving skills – can become a bad thing when there is not sufficient base knowledge from which to draw.

Our Response

At Rancho Christian, we seek to follow a classical style of education where students are still required to know math facts in Algebra, grammar in Language Arts, and other important information in science, literature, history, Bible, etc... but are challenged to think critically and analyze the information they have learned. Learning should not become an either/or proposition, therefore, our school embraces a both/and approach – where students are still required to commit to memory large amounts of information, but are then called upon to use this information in critical thinking exercises, group activities, and formal interdisciplinary projects and presentations.

Be Selective: “*Eat the Chicken and Spit Out the Bones*”

A great way to think about standards and educational trends is to analyze where they have come from, and why people have arrived at these conclusions. If something is broken, then it should be fixed. If our colleges, universities, and work places are filled with people who do not have the ability to work collaboratively or solve real world problems, then we need to look at the educational systems which have produced such students. We should ask: *Within these new standards are there time tested educational best practices that we can use?* All of the new curriculum and educational resources which are being produced to help students possess better problem solving skills may include very useful tools. In other words we should – *eat the chicken*. However, this does not mean that RCS will adopt every competing philosophy – *spit out the bones*. We can, and do, pick and choose the best that is available, and use it for the betterment of our educational system.