Procedure and Checklist for the Evaluation and Use of Secular Materials and Programs in Catholic Education

Instruction in Catholic education should not be driven by any particular text or program, but rather by rich and comprehensive standards that are informed by Catholic priorities. Resources such as the *Catholic Curriculum Standards* and *Standards for Christian Anthropology* can assist in this effort.

With proper standards in place, the first goal should be to seek out excellent Catholic programs and materials to aid in instruction. Should these not exist, or if available Catholic programs and materials are found insufficient, secular programs might be considered but should be carefully evaluated for their congruence with the mission of Catholic education. The following checklist, derived from The Cardinal Newman Society's *Policy Standards on Secular Academic Materials and Programs in Catholic Education*, may be helpful.

Keep in mind that all secular programs, no matter how effective, will need to be supplemented with materials that present a Catholic worldview and understanding of the subject at hand.

Procedure for Considering the Use of Secular Materials and Programs

1. Identify and validate (especially in terms of mission impact) the motivation behind the change.
2. Research best practices in Catholic education and available means to address program needs.
3. Seek out faithfully Catholic programs and materials for initial review, and only if they are insufficient or non-existent, explore other types of programs.

Checklist for Evaluating the Use of Secular Materials and Programs

Determine whether the program or material:

Yes / No   advances positions contrary to Church teaching, causes scandal, or could be a source of confusion about Catholic teaching.

Yes / No   promotes or encourages atheism, agnosticism, scientific materialism, or a false ideology about the human person.

Yes / No   promotes or encourages relativism or denies the existence of transcendent truth, which is knowable by reason and revelation.

Yes / No   obstructs the goal of uniting faith and reason, synthesizing faith with life and culture, and developing a Catholic worldview or a Catholic understanding of the human person.

Yes / No   is promoted or written by a person or group who might bring scandal to the Catholic institution through formal or material cooperation.

Yes / No   places excessive demands on testing, teacher formation, or another process that crowds out priorities of Catholic education (such as daily theology classes) and a strong Catholic culture.

Yes / No   encourages political and social activism that is not supported by Catholic principles or social teaching, such as subsidiarity or the universal destination of humanity in God, or suggests the permissibility to do evil or commit an injustice so that a perceived good may result.

Yes / No   suggests that man is capable of solving all his problems or attaining heaven through natural virtues and effort, without God's grace, mercy, and salvation.

For any Yes response:

- If the materials **explicitly and positively** raise challenges in this area, reject the program.
- If the materials only **tangentially or in a minor way** raise challenges in this area, heavily supplement with Catholic instruction and provide teacher training.
- If the materials **subtly and in a minor way raise challenges to a Catholic understanding,** either through omission or unevaluated assumptions, supplement with Catholic instruction or eliminate the particular area of concern.

If all responses are "No," the program is a possibly valid resource. Regardless, it still should be supplemented with instruction to provide for a Catholic understanding of the subject at hand.