



**Memorandum**

**To:** High School Principals and Teachers

**From:** Christopher Chapman

**Date:** August 18, 2008

**Re:** Diocese of Pittsburgh semester objectives and the USSCB curriculum framework correlation

The following objectives and course guidelines are the substantial foundation for each semester of High School religion.

The objectives are based on the USSCB's approved curriculum: *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Material for Young People of High School Age*, (copyright 2008, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. Reprinted and used by permission.) While the objectives have a close correspondence with the USSCB framework they are specific to the Diocese of Pittsburgh. We have matched our objectives with the course outlines produced by the USSCB's *ad hoc committee*, thus providing the objectives and content for each semester. This combination of objectives and course frameworks are the foundational content for each semester.

Within this framework though, each department and each teacher, with reference to their own department and school administration, has flexibility in deciding how best to fulfill the objectives and teach the content. We strongly encourage each teacher and department to engage the students on the level of culture, by prayerfully and thoughtfully presenting the content in a manner that is directed toward conversion of heart and mind.

On the very practical level, we still have an issue with appropriate books for the first three semesters of the curriculum. As of now, and probably for 2 or 3 years more, there is no textbook that corresponds exactly to the objectives of these semesters. Dept. Chairs need to work closely with newer teachers to help them navigate these difficult 3 semesters. This should be an opportunity to be creative in thinking through how to have the students encounter Christ, which seems to be the focus of these initial semesters. Please refer to the purple binder to seek out which books have been approved and then adapt them to your purposes as best you can.

The love and sexuality portion of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum has no direct correspondence with the framework provided by the Bishops. The Diocese has many resources available that can help one teach this extremely important element.

The 12<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum, which has a section devoted to world religions, also lacks a direct correlation. In the Bishops' framework they have made World Religions a separate elective. That is not the case for our diocesan curriculum, however you are free, of course, to consult the framework provided by the Bishops which can be found at the USCCB website. Both of these situations are noted in the curriculum outline.

Finally, each teacher should be keenly aware that religion/theology/catechesis, as presented in a High School setting, is an academic discipline, although never *merely* this. We should never lose sight that we are attempting to teach the students to think, write, and speak in concert with the other disciplines. Therefore we should strive to make religion class academically rigorous without sacrificing any of the heart. We want to graduate students who *love* and *know* the Catholic Faith. Our primary responsibility is to help them mature in the Faith. Our part in this process is played out in the classroom and the school. May we bear fruit through patient, but lovingly intense labor, rooted in our own duty to come to full maturity in Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication.