

THE 2014 -2015 ACRE ASSESSMENT FOR PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

May, 2014

I. PREPARATION PHASE:

1. Is it true that the ACRE assessment materials were updated in September 2013?

Yes, there is a new revised ACRE assessment as of the fall of September 2013.

Beginning with the 2014-2015 academic year, only the new ACRE assessment will be available and these booklets will have to be purchased at that time.

2. Will we be buying new assessment booklets this year?

Beginning July 1, 2014, only the revised assessment tool will be available and scored.

[The 2013-14 school year (from September 2013 through June 2014) was the transitional year where CA&L scored both the old (2001) and revised (2013) assessment tools.]

3. What is different in the 2013 version of the assessment?

Approximately thirty percent of the items in the questionnaire are new or revised; thus the question booklets will be different.

For the cognitive section (Part I) of the revised assessment, the number of domains, or areas of questioning in core faith concepts, was changed from eight domains to six domains.

These six domains match the six tasks of catechesis found in both the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *National Directory for Catechesis*. The six domains are: 1) Knowledge of the Faith; 2) Liturgical Life; 3) Moral Formation; 4) Prayer; 5) Communal Life and 6) Missionary Spirit.

ACRE Level 2 and ACRE Level 3 (for eighth- or ninth-graders and tenth - or eleventh-graders respectively) align fully with the USCCB document, *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. The current version already addresses more than 80% of the major areas of the *Framework*.

Because of this, the reports of student responses will look a bit different. The directions for the “Current Issues” section of Part 2 asks students to identify the extent to which they have witnessed particular situations happening at a parish or school; this change was made based on feedback from users that the 2001 wording “it is a problem” was being misinterpreted by many students.

4. What materials does our parish need to order?

Each parish will be required to order the following 3 items. Items “a” and “b” have a cost associated with them – see below. Item “c” is free but is required for the processing of the assessment:

- a. **ACRE Booklets** – these are the booklets the students will use during the assessment.
- b. **ACRE Student Answer sheets** – these are the sheets each student will use to mark down his/her answers during the assessment.
- c. **ACRE Header sheets** – these sheets will be completed by the DRE and returned with the ACRE Student Answer sheets for scoring. Header sheets are used to group each grade of students assessed.

You will also receive the “NCEA ACRE Assessment Instructions” and the “NCEA ACRE Administration Manual” with your materials.

5. Are there different levels of assessment booklets?

Yes. Level 1 is for 5th graders, Level 2 for 8th graders, and Level 3 for 2nd year Confirmation students. The assessment booklet for Level 3 states that it is intended for 11th and 12th graders, however, it is perfectly suitable for 10th grade as well, as the material is for that approximate age range.

6. Are the materials available in Spanish?

Yes. You can order ACRE booklets in either English or Spanish, or a combination of both.

7. How do we order these materials?

You can order the materials online at www.ncea.caltesting.org. On that site you will also find other useful information, such as the ACRE Administration Manual, the ACRE Interpretation Manual, and Proctor Guides.

8. What are the costs for these materials?

Below are the prices for the materials. If your parish is a member of NPCD (National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors) or a local Catholic school is a member of NCEA (National Catholic Education Association) then you can order everything through that entity at the discounted price. Please see Question #10 below for more information.

Item	Members	Non-Members
ACRE Booklets	\$1.20	\$1.55
ACRE Answer Sheets	\$2.75	\$3.50

The answer sheets for the new 2013 ACRE booklet are the same as the ones used for the 2001 ACRE booklet.

9. Why are the ACRE answer sheets so expensive?

In addition to the cost of the answer sheets themselves, the price includes the fee for processing and grading the sheets, and comparative results with other dioceses in NJ, as well as dioceses throughout the country.

10. Are there shipping costs involved?

Yes, but they are minimal. Please see the website in Question 7 for more information.

11. Is there any other pertinent information we need to know before purchasing items?

Yes. NCEA attempts to defray costs for parishes by offering you several options:

- a. You or your parish can become a member of NPCD and receive the ACRE materials at a discounted price. On a side note, the annual fee for an individual catechetical leader to belong to NPCD is \$89, while the annual fee for a parish to join NPCD as an entity is \$359.
- b. If your parish is not a member of NPCD, you can order all of your materials at a discounted price through another parish or Catholic school that belongs to either NPCD or NCEA. You are then able to mail out your answer sheets to the appropriate address for processing.
- c. The ACRE booklets can be shared among parishes or Catholic schools. For example, if a local Catholic school or a local parish has the ACRE booklets, you can borrow/share the booklets. This is useful especially if it is difficult to purchase the full number of 2013 ACRE Assessment booklets needed at this time.

12. When should we purchase the ACRE materials?

The 2013 ACRE Assessment booklets were available for purchase as of September 2013. You can begin ordering the ACRE booklets any time after that date.

II. ADMINISTRATION PHASE:

11. When does the ACRE Assessment need to be administered?

We suggest the month of January. Each DRE or CRE is free to determine the best date(s) on which to administer the assessment, but the answer sheets must be mailed out **no later than February 1, 2015**. The reason for this is to allow time for processing, and to participate in the national results.

12. Who is responsible for administering the ACRE Assessment?

The Director or Coordinator of Religious Education in each parish has the responsibility to ensure the ACRE Assessment is administered properly each year.

13. Can the DRE or CRE have someone else administer the assessment?

Yes, although it is preferable that the DRE or CRE administer the assessment herself/himself.

14. The ACRE Assessment sounds intimidating, is it difficult to administer?

No, it is not difficult to administer. Like standardized tests, the assessment comes with complete step-by-step instructions (see the website found in Question 7 above). The one administering the assessment needs to follow the preparatory instructions (which are very straight forward), read aloud the printed instructions to the students before the assessment begins, and finally collect the assessments once they are completed.

15. Will I need help in administering the assessment?

That will depend on the size of the class. Those who have had experience administering the assessment say that it is helpful to have two other catechists in the room.

16. How long does it normally take to administer the ACRE Assessment?

Although there is no time limit, an estimated 60 minutes is necessary to complete both Part One (Religious Knowledge) and Part Two (Personal Beliefs, Attitudes, Practices and Perceptions) of the assessment.

17. Do I need to grade anything?

No! There is nothing for you to grade. After the answer sheets are collected, you will need to assure the information is correctly filled out by the student. Then complete the “header sheet” and mail both the header and the answer sheets to the address indicated in the “NCEA ACRE Assessment Instructions”.

18. Can we offer a make-up time for those who were absent?

Yes, as long as it is done before the end of January. The more students assessed, the more accurate the assessment will be of the parish religious education program.

III. OTHER QUESTIONS:

19. How will our parish receive the results?

Your parish and the diocese will receive your results via email. Again, these will be general results (e.g. 94% of 8th graders believe Jesus is God).

20. Is there a way for our parish to obtain personal assessment scores for students?

Yes. NCEA offers the optional single page report for an additional charge (.85 per student for members, and \$1.00 per student for non-members). The individual reports will offer results on Part One of the assessment only (Religious Knowledge), NOT Part Two (Personal Beliefs, Attitudes, Practices and Perceptions).

21. Is it possible to help support poorer parishes in upcoming years?

Yes! This would be another concrete way of creating a deeper level of communion among diocesan parishes. Wealthier parishes could take the initiative in creating a partnership with poorer parishes and sponsor them in the purchasing of the ACRE booklets and / or answer sheets.

In addition, those parishes that receive the Religious Education Endowment are now allowed to use funds from the endowment toward the purchase of ACRE materials.

22. Will we provide an “opt-out” for students?

No. Aside from students already being well acquainted with standardized tests, it is vital for each parish to understand the positive and weak points in its religious education program with as much clarity as possible. When each parish has the opportunity to see clearly where

its religious education program stands, it will then be in a position to make meaningful and informed decisions as to the direction in which the program needs to move.

23. What about special needs children, will there be an “opt-out” opportunity for them?

Yes. An “opt-out” is available for special needs children if it is in the child’s best interest. That will be determined by the parents, in collaboration with the DRE.

Special needs classes can be assessed separately, and each parish can decide whether it wants personalized results from the assessment sent back to the DRE and parents.

24. For students who are enrolled in both parish programs and Catholic schools, where should they take the ACRE Assessment?

They should take part in the ACRE Assessment at their primary place of religious education. So if students attend a Catholic school they should take the assessment through the school.