

NCEA Assessments NCEA ACRE and IFG

Dear Diocesan Leader,

As you know, since the late 1970's, NCEA has provided four generations of assessment instruments to help Catholic educators assess the effectiveness of their religious education/catechetical programs for students. Heeding earlier directives from catechetical documents giving primacy to the faith formation of adults, in 1985 NCEA developed a comparable adult assessment tool, the Information for Growth (IFG). The *General Directory for Catechesis* reaffirms the primacy of adult catechesis and urges Catholic educators to accept it as the organizing principle for the catechesis of all other age groups. NCEA's Information for Growth (IFG), which assesses the faith knowledge and spirituality of Catholic adults, provides valuable information that many dioceses find enlightening when designing and implementing faith formation programs for adults. Because IFG faith knowledge assessment domains are aligned to the newly revised student assessment, NCEA Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (NCEA ACRE), you may wish to encourage or mandate schools and parishes to use both of these tools in tandem. In that way, you will have available to you a more comprehensive picture of the overall catechetical efforts and progress in your diocese.

In its continued effort to serve all Catholic educators, NCEA wants to help make the valuable data contained in NCEA ACRE-IFG group reports available to you. At the request of diocesan Superintendents of Catholic Schools, Diocesan Directors of Catechetical Ministry/Religious Education, and Directors of Total Catholic Education NCEA provides summary reports of the data from both of these assessment tools. Once again, NCEA wants you know that this information is available to every diocese at no cost.

To assist diocesan offices as well as its local schools and parishes, NCEA continues to generate two types of group reports. The first type is mailed automatically to a principal, coordinator or DRE at a participating school, parish program, home-based catechetical program or catechumenate director. The second type, a composite of participant results for diocesan leaders, must be requested; it is not mailed automatically. A diocesan office can receive this one-time gratis report about one month after the close of the diocesan assessment period when it submits a **written request with the closing date for the diocesan assessment period**. Every diocese that has any number of groups participating in NCEA ACRE-IFG is eligible for this Diocesan Group Report.

The data collected in these reports helps faith formation leaders reexamine catechesis/religious education goals, objectives and strategies in light of program strengths and shortcomings. In this way, local and diocesan leaders are better equipped to evaluate the effectiveness of the current curriculum and plan future initiatives. Local and diocesan leaders are free to share these group reports with each other, with assessment participants, faculty, catechists, and parent groups.

If your diocese wishes to receive a Diocesan Assessment Group Report for the current academic year, please complete a diocesan report request form and return it to NCEA's outsourcer for assessment scoring and reporting, Computerized Assessments Learning (CAL).

Sincerely,

[signed]

Diana Dudoit Raiche
Executive Director
Religious Education Assessments

Encl: Diocesan Report Request Form
Diocesan Participation Scenarios
NCEA Recommendations to Dioceses

Diocesan Participation Scenarios

NCEA has identified four levels of diocesan involvement with its religious education assessments, NCEA ACRE-IFG, which are described below. NCEA does not endorse one level of involvement over another, but offers the following scenarios for your information.

DIRECTIVE:

In this scenario, a diocese mandates diocesan-wide assessment through NCEA ACRE-IFG for students and/or adults in Catholic schools, parish-based or other religious education/catechetical programs, the catechumenate or adult faith formation/training programs. Some may require schools and parishes to participate in NCEA Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (NCEA ACRE). Other dioceses see the need to use the assessment for students, NCEA ACRE, and the tool for adults, Information for Growth (IFG) in tandem with each other or, at least, to provide an opportunity for teachers and catechists to participate in IFG. In the directive approach, identifiable groups order and pay for NCEA assessment materials through the diocese by diocesan request. The diocese then orders and pays for the materials. The materials can be mailed in bulk either to the diocese or to the individual groups according to instructions given when the order is placed. The closing date for assessment is set by diocesan leaders to insure that all groups complete the assessments by a specified time. Sometimes, a diocesan office collects completed answer sheets and returns them for processing all at once through a traceable mailing or shipping system, i.e., UPS; US Mail Return Receipt Requested; Federal Express; or RPS. In that way, the diocese is assured that its request for a group report includes all participating groups in the diocese. Diocesan leaders generally gather local principals, directors, and coordinators together to facilitate a reflection on and interpretation of the data provided in the group reports. This is an efficient and effective approach when a diocese has time and personnel to devote to this level of full-scale diocesan-wide assessment. In a few instances, a diocese pays for diocesan wide assessment.

DIRECTIVE WITH LIMITATIONS:

The Directive with Limitations scenario follows the basic pattern of the Directive scenario. A diocese mandates diocesan-wide NCEA ACRE/IFG assessment, but does not get involved in the order, payment, receipt and distribution of materials. However, a diocese does specify a closing date for the assessment period to insure that all groups complete the assessment process within a set period of time. When a diocese requests and receives the diocesan group report, diocesan leaders find out who participated in the diocesan-wide assessment program. Local group reports are sent to schools or other identifiable groups; diocesan group reports are sent to Superintendents of Catholic schools, Diocesan Directors of Catechetical Ministry/Religious Education or Directors of Total Catholic Education. A diocesan office may or may not facilitate a forum for gathering local principals, directors and coordinators together for the purpose of sharing these reports with each other.

AD HOC INVOLVEMENT:

A diocese with limited time and personnel to dedicate to diocesan-wide assessment sometimes supports the idea, but does not mandate it. In this scenario, a diocese encourages schools, parishes, those involved in the catechumenate or home-based religious education initiatives to participate in NCEA's assessments (NCEA ACRE-IFG), but the diocesan office does not facilitate, order, pay for, or receive and distribute the materials. The diocese may or may not determine a closing date for the assessment and may or may not request and receive a diocesan report. If the diocese does request and receive a group report, it will include only those groups who voluntarily participated in the assessment process within the time frame set by the diocese. It is up to the diocese to communicate the closing date for assessment to all the groups within its boundaries. Generally, in this scenario, a diocese does not facilitate the sharing of assessment information or the interpretation of the data.

NON-DIRECTIVE INTERESTED INVOLVEMENT:

A diocese may or may not wish to be directly involved in diocesan-wide assessment of its adults and students. In the event that identifiable groups do participate in NCEA ACRE-IFG on their own initiative, a diocesan leader may wish to receive a diocesan group report, but does not realize that a request for the report is required or that an ending date for the assessment period is needed. To receive a report, a request with a set closing date must be submitted in order to know to whom to send a report and when to generate it.

**Diocesan Assessment Report Request form
NCEA Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (NCEA ACRE)
and Information for Growth (IFG)**

A diocese may request a gratis summary report for NCEA ACRE and/or IFG that provides group data on participating schools, parish-based religious education programs, catechumenate groups and home-based programs. To request such a report, complete and return the form below with a roster to NCEA's outsourcer for scoring and reporting:

Computerized Assessments and Learning, LLC
1202 East 23rd Street, Ste. B
Lawrence, KS 66046
Toll free: 1-866-406-3850
Fax: 785-856-3852

Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (NCEA ACRE)

Please send a diocesan group report on the following date _____ / _____ (Month/Year) for the SCHOOLS and/or PARISHES and/or OTHER Religious Education Programs participating in NCEA ACRE. We understand that when answer sheets for all the participating groups do not arrive within the diocesan assessment closing date (one month before the date the diocesan report is requested above), the summary report may be delayed or may be incomplete, and it is up to the diocese to monitor participant compliance with its assessment closing date. **A list is provided of all participating sites by grade and/or NCEA ACRE level.**

Diocese: _____

Contact Person: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State and Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ FAX: _____

e-mail: _____

Information for Growth (IFG)

Please send a diocesan group report on the following date _____ / _____ (month/year) for the SCHOOLS, and/or PARISHES and/or OTHER Religious Education Programs participating in IFG. We understand that when the answer sheets for all participating groups do not arrive for scoring by the assessment closing date (one month before the diocesan report is requested above), the summary report may be delayed or may be incomplete, and it is up to the diocese to monitor participant compliance with its assessment closing date. **To facilitate the process, a list is provided of all participating sites.**

Diocese: _____

Contact Person: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State and Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ FAX: _____

e-mail: _____

NCEA Recommendations to Dioceses Regarding Implementation of the NCEA ACRE Assessment

1. Please **prepare schools and parishes** before launching into student assessment of catechesis/religious education using NCEA ACRE:
 - a. **Communicate** with principals, DREs, religious department chairpersons and coordinators (personal letter or newsletter) **well in advance** that the diocese will be promoting full participation in catechesis/religious education assessment. Request free brochures from NCEA to include in this mailing.
 - b. Tell local leaders **why** the diocese wants to formally evaluate religious education programs with NCEA ACRE.
 - c. Tell local leaders **what** you plan to do with the information, allaying fears that the word "evaluation" may elicit from principals and DREs.
 - d. Whether the diocese will order and pay for all materials, or whether the diocese will order and collect money from local sites for all materials, or whether the diocese will instruct local leaders to order materials, the diocese should make sure everyone knows **how to order materials** from the Computerized Assessments Learning (CAL). Although payment for materials is assigned to CAL, NCEA owns and oversees management of its assessments.

2. Please **stress the following** with your local leaders:
 - a. **Read all materials when they arrive**; do not set them aside to read the day the assessment is administered.
 - b. Do the **curriculum alignment process** called "Appendix C" with all teachers/catechists as soon as materials arrive.
 - c. Local sites can add up to **20 local questions** to NCEA ACRE. A diocese may consider having all local sites add the same questions written by the diocese every third year.
 - d. **Tell parents and students ahead of time** when assessment for religion will occur.
 - e. Local leaders will need to **set aside time to interpret the data** using the NCEA ACRE Interpretation Guide. Call NCEA for help on interpretation or check the website www.ncea.org for interpretation tips.
 - f. If a local site elects to receive **individual student reports**, suggest that they send them home with an accompanying letter of explanation at a time other than report card time.

3. **Set a date** for local leaders to have all answer sheets returned to CAL.

4. **Send Diocesan Report Request Form & Roster of Schools and Parishes** to CAL so they will know when to run your diocesan report. If you want the report to share at a Board Meeting, request it far enough in advance so you have time to digest the data.

5. **Keep & track data from year to year** so you can plot progress.