39th BIENNIAL CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS

July 13-18, 2008

Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC

DIRECT ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OFFICE OF EDUCATION REPORT

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* serves the District's Greek Orthodox parochial day schools and the afternoon Greek language schools. It provides professional training for all teachers (of Greek and English curricula), guidelines and materials for teaching Greek as a second/foreign language, and the *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek* for the evaluation of student learning.

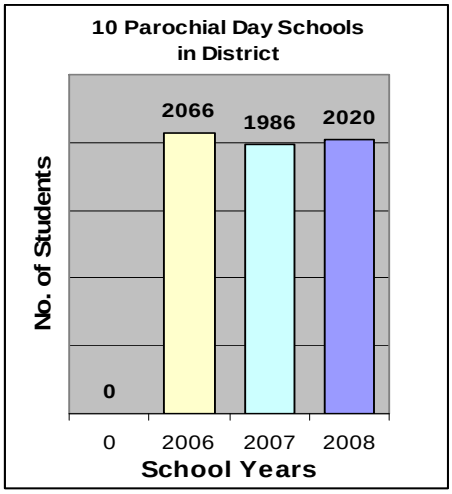
Furthermore, the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* represents the Greek Orthodox parochial day schools of New York to education authorities at the federal, state, and city levels. The participation of the director of the District Office at various conferences and committees, notably the *Standing Committee of Religious and Independent Schools of New York City*, has initiated contacts, which have helped provide the day schools with various services and resources.

Greek Orthodox Parochial Schools Education

In the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education*, there are **10** parochial day schools and **46** afternoon or Saturday Greek language schools in operation. The enrollment of the parochial day schools for the school year that just ended (2007-08) was **2,020** students. The number of students, who attended afternoon Greek language classes during the same time, was **3,300**.

The Day Schools

Although the number of students attending the parochial day schools has remained steady, the **synthesis** of the student population of most schools has dramatically changed during the recent past years. With the exception of two schools, the St. Demetrios School, **Astoria** and "W. Spyropoulos" of St. Nicholas, **Flushing**, which only accept students of the Orthodox Faith, the rest of the schools are experiencing a **50%** surge of non-Orthodox, non-of-Greek descent students.



The decrease in the number of students of Greek Orthodox descent has resulted in financial hardships for most day schools. Having faced such difficulties for several years, the ***"Soterios Ellenas"***

School of the *Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church*, **Brooklyn** underwent a gradual transformation into a charter school, *"The Hellenic Classical Charter School*." The *"Soterios Ellenas" School***,** which ceased to exist as a parochial day school in 2007, operates today as an early childhood center.

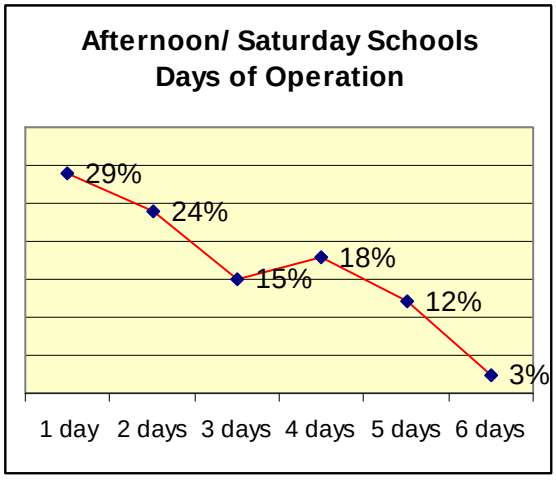
The shift in student population indicates that the Greek Orthodox parochial day schools may very well serve the broader communities surrounding them. Families from the neighborhood choose to send their children to the Greek Orthodox day schools for their primary and secondary education because of the **Christian atmosphere, family environment, personal attention,** and **the sound education** they offer.

Additionally, the shift prompts us to think that a new **philosophy** defining the purpose for existence of the Greek Orthodox parochial schools – at least for those serving the broader American communities – should be drafted and adapted to those families' needs.

The Greek Orthodox parochial schools have all the potential to attract greater numbers of students from the neighborhood and better survive the financial hardship. They need, however, to take up the challenge and change the aims and objectives of their curricula to meet the new student population's educational needs. They also need to systematically follow the mandates of the federal, state, and city education authorities, in order to benefit from the services that are available for the nonpublic schools.

The Afternoon Schools

It is worth noting that the number of afternoon school students has remained the same, if not slightly increased, in the past three years. The number of students, however, is higher in lower grades than in upper. Students who remain in the Greek afternoon school studying up to the **eighth** grade are those preparing for The *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek*, which offers the students the opportunity to receive high school credits in a foreign language.



Also, worth noting is that the majority of the afternoon schools operate **twice** or **once** a week as opposed to the five days a week they used to hold classes in the past.

The Federal Government's Policy on Faith-Based Schools

The ***"No Child Left Behind Act"*** that was signed into Law by **President George W. Bush** in 2002 favors *"school choice"* and provides benefits to the students and teachers of private and faith-based schools.

The Greek Orthodox parochial day schools have always been *"schools of choice."* These faith-based day schools have graduated thousands of students who have distinguished themselves as adults in all professions and are worthy members of our Church and the American society at large

Today thousands of parents – not necessarily of Greek descent – *choose* to send their children to Greek Orthodox parochial day schools because they offer a well-rounded education – one that incorporates religion and moral values into the curriculum, offers a sense of community, involves parents in their children's education, and provides a safe environment for children to grow in.

Recognizing the invaluable contribution of the parochial day schools to the Church and the Greek-American community, the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* has intensified its efforts, in recent years, to help the New York City based schools benefit from the services available to them through the federal government's ***"No Child Left Behind Act."***

Acting in unison with the principals and speaking on their behalf, the *District Office* has joined other religious organizations and educational agencies, in order to secure the services and resources earmarked by the government for the Greek Orthodox parochial school teachers and students. Today the *Office* is a member of the following religious education entities:

1. The ***Coalition of Religious Institutions and Independent Schools,*** Albany.
2. The ***Standing Committee of New York City Religious and Independent Schools.***
3. The ***New York City Religious Schools Committee.***

Other notable members of the above mentioned committees are: Agudath Israel of America; the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York; the Association of Catholic School Administrators; the Archdiocese of New York (Roman Catholic); The Diocese of Brooklyn (Roman Catholic); the Islamic Schools Association; the Lutheran Schools Association; the New York State Council of Catholic School Superintendents; and the New York State Association of Independent Schools.

Conferences & Meetings

In the two-year interim since the **38th Clergy-Laity Congress** (July 2006-Nashville,TN), the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education director*, Mrs. Maria Makedon, has participated in the following conferences and meetings representing the District's Greek Orthodox parochial day schools:

On the Federal Level

2006: October 4 — **The Second Annual Private School Leadership Conference.** The U.S. Department of Education/Office of Innovation and Improvement/Non-Public Education, Washington, DC.

2007: February 15 — **A Conversation with the Hon. Margaret Spellings**, U.S. Secretary of Education. Sponsored by TIAA-CREF Business/Higher Education Forum & The Partnership for New York City, Manhattan.

2007: August 21 — **A White House Compassion in Action Roundtable**: *"Real Choices For Educational Improvement: How Faith-Based and Community Organizations Help Bridge the Achievement Gap*." The Eisenhower Executive Office, Washington, DC.

2007: September 25 — **The Third Annual Private School Leadership Conference.** The U.S. Department of Education/Office of Innovation and Improvement//Non-Public Education, Washington, DC.

2008: April 24 **White House Summit on Inner-City Children and Faith-Based Schools.** The Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center**,** Washington, DC.

President **George W. Bush** speaking on the importance of faith-based schools and pledging full support.

For more information, please visit: **http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/education/whschoolsummit/index.html**

On the State Level

2006: November 13 **The 22nd Annual Conference for Administrators of Independent and Religious Schools:** *"Educational Leadership: Strength in Knowledge,"* Albany, NY.

2007: October 15 **The 23rd Annual Conference for Administrators of Independent and Religious Schools:** *"Leading Schools, Developing Minds, and Educating the Future."* Albany, NY.

2007: October 16 **The State Education Department, Albany, NY**. Meeting of **Ms. Mary Holmes**, Associate Director for Foreign Language Instruction with Mrs. Maria Makedon, Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education Director.

On the City Level

2007: January 17 **Lutheran Schools Association**, New York, NY. Meeting of **Dr. Mark Misener**, Director of the New York City Department of Health with the *Standing Committee of NYC Religious and Independent Schools.*

2007: February 28 **New York City Department of Education, Brooklyn, NY.** Meeting of **Dr. Margaret Weiss**, Director of Bureau of Nonpublic Schools Reimbursable Services with the *Standing Committee of NYC Religious and Independent Schools.*

2007: November 8 **New York City Department of Education, Brooklyn, NY.** Meeting of **Joel I. Klein,** Chancellor of Education, with the *Standing Committee of NYC Religious and Independent Schools.*

2008: January 16 **New York City Department of Education, Brooklyn, NY**. Meeting of **Karen Zayde-Moncher**, Director of Bureau of Nonpublic Schools Reimbursable Services, with the *Standing Committee of NYC Religious & Independent Schools.*

2008: February 11 **The Archdiocese of New York(Roman Catholic) Headquarters.** Meeting of the *New York City Religious Schools Committee.*

2008: May 12 **New York City Department of Education, Brooklyn, NY**. Meeting of **Karen Zayde-Moncher**, Director of Bureau of Nonpublic Schools Reimbursable Services, with the *Standing Committee of NYC Religious & Independent Schools.*

Principals Meetings

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* holds regular meetings with the **principals** of the Greek Orthodox parochial day schools in New York City to discuss matters of mutual concern and to collaborate on projects and events. Since September 2006, the principals have met on 11 different occasions under the chairmanship of Mrs. Maria Makedon. Principals meetings took place on the following dates:

2006: September 19; October 18; November 28
2007: February 8; April 20; June 1; August 30; October 23
2008: January 18; March 14; May 23

The benefits for the NYC Greek Orthodox parochial day schools

As a result of the participation in and collaboration of the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* with the above mentioned committees, the Greek Orthodox parochial day schools in New York were given **the distinct Code Number 4** by the *NYC Department of Education and* have received the following services and resource materials during the past two years:

1. The software program"**Earobics,"** a language-arts program for grades K-3, worth over **$200,000**. The schools received **72 computers** with a connection to the Web as well as teacher training on the use of the program (School Year 2006-07).

2. Funding of the annual ***Archdiocesan District* Annual *Staff-Development Seminar*** and resource materials (books, audio/visual aids, etc,) worth over **$48,000** (School Year 2007-08).

3. Professional training, **free-of-charge**, for the teachers and administrators of the Greek Orthodox parochial day schools at local colleges and universities, such as **Adelphi** and **St. John's University,** leading to master degrees and certification (ongoing).

Major Projects Completed

The Kindergarten Curriculum

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* has recently published a ***Curriculum for Kindergarten*** for the teaching of Greek as a second language to children of this age group. The realization of a long-standing recommendation of the **35th Clergy-Laity Congress** (July 2000-Philadelphia, PA), the *Curriculum* aims at instilling in the young learners a sense of pride, love, and respect for the Greek cultural heritage and the Christian Orthodox Faith.

The ***Kindergarten Curriculum*** places an emphasis on oral communication and is divided into 13 thematic units, with one unit devoted exclusively to major religious holidays and customs. It offers an abundance of activities and a list of resources (songs, poems, stories, and games) to help the kindergarten teacher meet the objective of each lesson and is accompanied by basic vocabulary words and phrases for communication. Teachers are advised to use it as a *"guide"*, adapt it to their student needs and abilities, and use their own resources to meet its goals and objectives.

The publication of the Kindergarten Curriculum was made possible due to a generous grant from the *"Stavros S. Niarchos" Foundation* and is offered **gratis** to the schools.

Workshop on The K-Curriculum & Early Childhood Education

The *St. Sophia Afternoon Greek School*, **Washington, DC**, in collaboration with the *Office of the Education Counselor*/Embassy of Greece, organized an afternoon workshop on Saturday, **April 5, 2008,** on the teaching of Greek to kindergarten-age children.

Mrs. Maria Makedon, director of the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* and one of the Curriculum's writers, Mrs. Haroula Ntalla, were invited to present the new **Kindergarten Curriculum.** Participants examined the philosophy, scope, and content of the *Curriculum* and discussed extensively the role and methods of teaching of the kindergarten teacher. 25 teachers serving in the area community and independent/charter schools participated in the workshop.

The District Office's New Web Page: www.education.goarch.org

The **37th Clergy-Laity Congress** (NYC) recommendation of the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* to create a web page devoted to the projects and on-going activities of the District Office to was finally fulfilled with the technical assistance of the Archdiocese's IT Department. The new web page – www.education.goarch.org – provides an abundance of information and resources on the Greek language and culture and a detailed listing of the District's day and afternoon schools.

On-Going Events and Activities

The Annual Staff-Development Seminar

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* organizes a *Staff Development Seminar* in November (Election Day) of each year offering in-service training to all teachers serving in the District's day and the afternoon schools. Held under the auspices of **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America**, the following Seminars took place during the last two years:

2006

The annual *Staff-Development Seminar* was held on **November 7, 2006** at St. Demetrios High School, Astoria. The Seminar included a large number of workshops covering all areas of study and grades (pre-K to high school) and aiming at helping teachers integrate new knowledge and techniques into their practice. A list of workshops follows: *Creating a Quality Early Childhood Classroom Learning Environment; Crafting Characters Using Picture Books; Literacy in the Classroom; Mathematics for Elementary School Teachers; Habitat Ecology Learning Program; Stress and Anger Management; Classroom Management; Evaluation and Treatment of ADD/ADHD Disorders; ESL: Teaching in the Multi-Level Classroom; Technology in the Classroom (Use of Power Point, Internet and Webquests); School Safety/School Negligence and the Law;* and *Sexual Harassment.*

2007

The annual *Staff Development Seminar* was held on **November 6, 2007**, at St. Demetrios High School, Astoria. The Seminar featured an array of *morning workshops* and *afternoon presentations***,** covering all areas of study and grades (pre-K to high school).

The 2007 Staff Development Seminar was the result of collaboration between the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* and the **School of Education/ Dept. of Literacy** of **St. John's University, Jamaica, NY**. There were also workshops that were conducted by renowned educators from **Queens College** and **Manhattanville College.**

The Greek teachers attended the AM workshop *"How to Incorporate Culture into the Foreign Language Classroom."* In the afternoon, they were informed about *"The Assessments that follow National Standards in Foreign Language Teaching."*

The Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek: A Foreign Language Assessment Tool

A major undertaking of the *Direct Archdiocesan Office of Education* is the development and administration of the *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek***,** a foreign language achievement test that assesses student proficiency in **listening**, **speaking**, **reading**, and **writing** Modern Greek. The *Examination* is given in June of each year.

The *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek* follows the specifications of the *New York State* guidelines for Regents comprehensive examinations in modern languages. It is administered to public and community school students in grades eighth and above. Students who pass the Examination receive foreign language high school credits in the State of New York. It is estimated that more than 20,000 students have benefited from the *Examination* during its 35 years of existence.

The *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek* is also given to afternoon school students in some localities of New Jersey, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Virginia. More information on the *Examination* as well as past tests, one may find by visiting the *District Office's* web page at www.education.goarch.org.

Workshop On Rating Students Oral & Written Performance, Hicksville, NY

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* held a workshop on Saturday, **April 12, 2008**, at **Holy Trinity Church**, **Hicksville, NY** for the Greek teachers in-charge of the *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek*. The Seminar dealt with the administration and rating exclusively of two major components of the *Examination*: S*peaking* and Writing.

Ms. Vivian Selenicas, Executive Officer for Instruction at the ***Office of Integrated Curriculum and Instruction***, of the NYC Department of Education and a LOTE specialist, along with Mrs. Maria Makedon, director of the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* conducted the training, which included hands-on experience for the teachers. **40** teachers serving in the afternoon Greek language schools of Long Island and Brooklyn attended

The Students Awards Ceremony

In conjunction with the celebrations of Greek Letters in January of each year, the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* organizes a special event to acknowledged the students who achieved a perfect score (100) on the *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek* on the previous year.

2007

The *Students Awards Ceremony* was held on **January 27, 2007**, at the Holy Trinity Cathedral Center in Manhattan. **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios** bestowed *The Three Hierarchs Award of Excellence* to 42 students who had excelled on the *2006 Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek.* Guest speaker was **Prof. John Spiridakis** of St. John's University, Jamaica, NY.

2008

The *Students Awards Ceremony* was held on **January 26, 2008**, at the Holy Trinity Cathedral Center in Manhattan. **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios** bestowed *The Three Hierarchs Award of Excellence* to 46 students who had excelled on the *2007 Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek.* Guest speaker was **Mr. John Stratakis, Esq**., President of the Board of Trustees of the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Manhattan.

The Spelling Bee Contest in the English Language

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Greek Education* hosts and coordinates annually the *Archdiocesan District Spelling Bee Contest* in the English language among the finalists (champions) of the Greek Orthodox parochial day schools of New York.

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Annual Competition* is part of an extended round of competitions that are held throughout NYC, in public and nonpublic schools, among students in grades fifth to eighth. The *Spelling Bee Competitions* are an educational promotion sponsored by *The E.W. Scripps Company*. Sponsor of the Contest for the City of New York public and non public school students is the newspaper DAILY NEWS.

2007

The annual *Spelling Bee* took place on **February 6, 2007,** at the Archdiocesan headquarters. **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America** congratulated the *champions* and presented each one with an *Award Certificate* and a Greek History book as a gift.

2008

The annual *Spelling Bee* took place on **February 5, 2008**, at the Archdiocesan headquarters. **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America** congratulated and presented each student with an *Award Certificate* and a gift card from the bookstore Barnes & Noble.

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios with the 2008 Parochial Day School Spelling Bee Champions

Resource Materials

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* has composed a list of recommended books, suitable to the needs of today's young learners of the Greek language. These books and other resources, such as certificates and diplomas, are available through the *District Office's* **Catalog,** which is displayed on its newly created web page www.education.goarch.org., as well as on the official Archdiocese web site www.OrthodoxMarketplace.com.

Submitted by
MARIA MAKEDON June 16, 2008