



35TH BIENNIAL CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS
PHILADELPHIA - JULY 2-7, 2000

REPORT ON GREEK EDUCATION AND CULTURE

“Our target is the growth and preservation of a robust and illumined **Orthodox identity** as a basic characteristic of the members of our Greek Orthodox Church, particularly of our young generation, of our beloved and very promising children. This **Greek Orthodox identity** will enable our Greek-American faithful to stand with dignity and pride in the midst of our American fellow-citizens, respecting their religious and political beliefs within the large scheme of pluralism and globalization but, at the same time, insisting in the effort to safeguard the unique treasure which is our **Orthodox Faith**, and to cherish our precious asset which we all acknowledge to be our **Greek heritage**”.

ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS

Enthronement Speech, New York, 9/18/1999

The educational programs offered by the Archdiocesan Department of Greek Education, in addition to teaching the Modern Greek language, have always aimed at instilling in the minds and hearts of our youth the spiritual, moral and cultural values of our Greek Orthodox Faith and cultural heritage.

There are **19** parochial day schools currently functioning in the United States with a total student enrollment of **3,989** students. Operating under an annual budget of approximately **17 million dollars**, these schools maintain pre-school centers, kindergartens, elementary, junior high, and high school grades. They employ **389** teachers, **57** of whom are teachers of the Greek language.

In addition to the parochial day schools, approximately **300** parishes from within the 500 communities in the United States sustain **afternoon Greek language schools** or **Saturday programs** as well as classes for adults for the teaching of the Greek language and culture. It is estimated that **25,000-30,000** students, ages 6 to adult, are enrolled in these programs.

The Archdiocesan Department of Education oversees the parochial day and afternoon schools, which constitute the Archdiocesan School System. Under its supervisory capacity and as the regulatory authority of the educational material to be taught, the Archdiocesan Office of Greek Education provides the community schools with the following:

1. General curriculum guidelines for the teaching of the Greek Orthodox Faith, the modern Greek language and culture;
2. Seminars and workshops on the teaching of Greek as a second/foreign language;
3. Programs and presentations that promote the Greek Orthodox heritage;
4. Assessment materials and examinations;
5. Materials for the teaching of the Greek language and culture (books, audio/visual cassettes, maps, computer CDs, etc.);
6. The “Three Hierarchs Award of Excellence” for outstanding achievement in Greek studies.

The Department's Expanded Role

Historically the Greek Education Department's mission has focused on the Greek studies program of our community day and afternoon schools. In the last ten years, however, the Department of Greek Education has entered a new phase of operation.

Because of its close proximity to the **11 parochial day schools** located in the **metropolitan New York area**, the Department has undertaken and successfully carried out, during the last decade, various educational activities and projects that specifically address the needs of the parochial day school students and teachers. Since these activities have an affect on the education of a large number of community school students, they are deemed as extremely important and necessary. They also require specialized skills and knowledge on the part of the Department's personnel.

In dealing with the whole aspect of the educational process that affects the American-born student population, the Archdiocesan Department of Education:

- Participates in meetings and attends conferences regarding current educational practices, city/state mandates and reforms. Also, it provides for the **in-service training** of day school teachers by organizing workshops and staff development seminars, in cooperation with federal, state and other nonpublic school agencies.
- Develops and administers annually the Modern Greek Language Comprehensive Examination, an examination that has been highly regarded and well accepted by the New York educational authorities for its quality and validity. The development of this examination includes: **test item writing, publishing, production of an audiocassette as well as teacher and proctor training**. As such, it requires specialized skills and knowledge.

The Examination is given to all New York high school students for foreign language credit. In addition, Greek afternoon students in NJ, CT, VA and FL take the examination. The Archdiocese issues special **"certificates of studies and grade reports"** to the students who pass.

The Department's Cultural Aspect

The Archdiocesan Department of Education in January of each year, in conjunction with the Feast Day of the Three Hierarchs, celebrates Greek Orthodox Paideia. The Department's festive programs for the teachers and students of the metropolitan New York area include: a **Divine Liturgy**, an **Award Ceremony** for students who excelled in Greek studies, a **Vasilopita Reception** for the Greek teachers, and a **Lecture/Celebration** for a broader audience.

A Major Concern

There has been much concern and discussion lately regarding a **possible Greek teacher shortage** and **the need to adequately train new ones** and **re-train** those who are presently teaching in the community schools.

To assess the existing needs of our community schools on Greek speaking teaching personnel, the Archdiocesan Department of Greek Education has recently conducted **a survey** on the local parish level. As a result, the Department received a good feedback from the parishes to which the survey was sent. The data collected is representative and of substantial value, since they not only show whether there is a need for Greek teachers, but they also reflect the picture that currently exists in our schools. The respondents describe the kind of teachers they want (days, hours, grade levels) and indicate how much they are willing to pay them for their services.

A comprehensive analysis of the survey data is available and will be discussed at the Greek Education Committee's meeting.

SUGGESTIONS

The Archdiocesan Department of Greek Education kindly requests the Greek Education Committee of the 35th Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress to:

1. Discuss, clarify and define the Department's future **mission**, in light of its expanded role and responsibilities on the local level (Archdiocesan District) during the last decade. By establishing the parameters of the Department's future function, new goals and objectives might be set that would promote Greek Orthodox education and culture within the Archdiocese's church schools and better serve the needs of the students and teachers.
2. Discuss and make sound recommendations regarding ways to adequately **train** new teachers and re-train those currently serving in the Archdiocesan School System. Teacher training will require the cooperation of the Archdiocesan Department of Education with the local dioceses, the Hellenic College, American colleges, and the Greek Ministry of Education. Teacher education programs and staff-development seminars must be available to the teachers throughout the United States, and/or may be completed through self-study, correspondence, and the web (virtual education).
3. Suggest ways by which the materials currently used by our teachers will be best judged for appropriateness **of their content and grade-level suitability. The quality and appropriateness of the content of the Greek books taught in our community day and afternoon schools is of major importance and should concern us all.**
4. Discuss ways by which **projects and various publications** that promote the Archdiocese's Greek Education programs could be **adequately funded**. Several projects of the Archdiocesan Department of Education have been left unfinished or never materialized, due to the financial restrictions imposed on it during the last 5-6 years, or because of its limited number of personnel. These projects include, but are not limited to:
 - A Course of Study for the teaching of Greek as a foreign language based on foreign language teaching guidelines and contemporary methodology;
 - A curriculum for Kindergarten accompanied by instructional aids: Greek songs and plays, games and simple language exercises.
 - A curriculum and instructional aids (in both Greek & English) for the teaching of our Greek Orthodox heritage (Ancient Greek mythology, history and culture);

- A national examination that will lead to an Archdiocesan diploma in Greek studies;
- Test materials for student placement according to grade levels;
- A pamphlet of 3000 Greek words intended for higher grades as vocabulary resource material as well as for organizing a Greek Spelling Bee Contest;
- A compilation of the Comprehensive Examinations in Modern Greek of the last 10 years, which could be used as instructional Greek language material for higher grades.

5. Finally, make sound **recommendations for empowering the Department of Greek Education** with the necessary human and technological resources to efficiently and successfully carry out its future mission.

00000

The Greek Orthodox parochial education offered by the Archdiocese aims at helping young people to comprehend the meaning and appreciate the value of the cultural and religious heritage of our Greek Orthodox Church. Thus, it contributes immensely to the development of well-informed, responsible, and progressive members of our Church and should be viewed as a vital component of the overall educational program in each parish.

In light of the above, it will be wise to re-examine our resources and assess our needs, in order to upgrade, reorganize, and, perhaps, expand the educational scope of the Archdiocesan Department of Education. This will enable the Department to produce new programs that will fulfill the spiritual and cultural needs of our young people and create “...*a Greek Orthodox identity that will enable them to stand with dignity and pride in the midst of their American fellow-citizens...*”, as His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios has stated.

00000

Submitted by:

Mrs. Maria Makedon, Asst. Director, Archdiocesan Department of Greek Education
Mr. Thomas N. Dallas, Greek Education Committee Chairman

July 3, 2000