



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

DIRECT ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY

MARCH 1-2, 2010

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, NEW ROCHELLE, NY

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* is responsible for assisting the parochial schools of the *District* to offer a comprehensive program of studies that encompasses the teaching of the Greek language and culture and our Christian Orthodox Faith.

The *District Office* provides assistance and facilitates the administrators and teachers of the **57** parochial schools of the *District*, ultimately thus benefiting the thousands of students – **5,705** to be exact – who attend these schools. The task is enormous.

The District Schools

There are **11** parochial **day** schools and **46** Greek **afternoon** schools currently functioning in the *District*. The day schools are all based in NYC. (*For information on the schools and student enrollments, please refer to the two last pages of my Report.*)

These parish sustained schools are **distinct** in terms of their curricula and objectives. They have only one common characteristic: **the program of Greek studies**, which aims at cultivating and fostering the teaching of the Greek language and culture.

However, the Greek studies program is just a **part** of the academic curriculum of the parochial day schools, which must adhere to state regulations and guidelines for designing curricula and evaluating student progress. It is the compliance of the schools with state mandates that determines eligibility for services and materials that are funded by federal and state money. Government funded services are afforded to nonpublic schools in the form of professional development and materials, such as textbooks, library books, and technology equipment.

Being different regarding their curricula and objectives, the parochial day and afternoon schools attract a diverse group of students: students of Greek and non-Greek descent; from Greek speaking and non Greek speaking families; of the Christian Orthodox faith, or other faiths.

These students who have different needs and learning abilities come to the parochial day schools eager to be taught and immersed in the Greek Orthodox culture. It is our duty, therefore, to offer them an education that combines high academic standards and the ideals and values of our Greek Orthodox cultural heritage.

The District Office of Education

A) Assisting the Parochial Day Schools

In light of the fact that the national Office of Greek Education of the Archdiocese is committed to assist the parochial schools with their **Greek studies program**, the *District Office* was able to shift its attention, during the last 5-6 years, and address the needs of the NYC parochial day schools.

The principals of the day schools had long pleaded with the *District Office* to be their representative to the education authorities and to speak on their behalf -- as a school system operating under the auspices of the Archdiocese. They knew that speaking in unison could strengthen their presence amidst the other religious schools in the City and bring more funded services to the schools. And we succeeded in doing that.

In the last years, the day schools have received software and hardware equipment, along with teacher training, worth over \$200,000 and books and audio visual resource materials worth over \$100,000. Last week alone, for example, we ordered – our *Office* ordered on their behalf – books worth \$20,000 and technology equipment (smart boards for each school) worth over \$10,000.

In addition, four of our day school teachers graduated from well known universities (St. John's and Adelphi) with a master's degree in School Administration – their tuition paid from federal funds earmarked for professional development.

The *District Office of Education* plays a leading role today in representing the day schools at the *New York City Department of Education*, the *New York State Education Department* in Albany, and the *U.S. Department of Education*, in Washington, DC.

The *District Office* is also a member of the *Standing Committee of NYC Religious Schools Officials* that includes representation from the following organizations: *the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York*, *the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn*, *the Board of Jewish Education*, *Agudath Israel of America*, *the Lutheran Schools Association*, and *the Islamic Schools Association*.

The *Standing Committee of NYC Religious Schools Officials* meets regularly with representatives of the NYC Department of Education to discuss issues pertaining to the nonpublic schools. Once a year, its members have the opportunity to meet with Joel I. Klein, the NYC Chancellor of Education.

As the director of the *District Office of Education* and as the liaison of the District's parochial day schools, I have the opportunity to attend these meetings as well as the annual *Conference of Religious Schools Administrators*, held in Albany, and the annual *Conference of Religious Schools Leadership* that is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, DC. The information I receive is disseminated to the day school principals.

Furthermore, the *District Office* holds meetings with the day school principals at regular intervals. Occasionally, the *Office* invites, as guest speakers, representatives from the **City** and **State** education authorities, from the Department of **Health**, book vendors, and other officials who inform the principals on such issues as the following:

- Professional development in line with state standards
- The NPSIS state database for student registration
- Pre-school regulations
- Health issues and Immunizations
- State mandated exams
- Purchase of funded materials
- The Universal Pre-K programs, etc.

And the list does not end here.

The *District Office of Education* is in contact on a daily basis, via e-mail, with the education authorities. The numerous emails that we receive are instantly disseminated to the principals of the parochial day schools.

B) Assisting the Greek Afternoon Schools

As I stated previously, the *District Office's* ultimate goal is to benefit all the students of the *District* schools, and that implies the afternoon school students as well.

1) One major project of the *District Office* that benefits all students – of the day and the afternoon school students alike – is the ***Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek***, which is developed and administered by our *Office* since 1973. (*I undertook the responsibility in 1989.*)

In developing the *Examination*, the Office follows the New York State standards on foreign language testing, and this is the reason that the *Examination* is widely accepted by the public school principals in New York for foreign language credit.

It is worth noting that the State Education Department placed the *Greek Comprehensive Examination* under its program of mandated services last year, which means that public and nonpublic schools could get reimbursed by the State for administering this examination on their premises.

In its 37 years of existence, the *Greek Comprehensive Examination* has benefited thousands of students. Today, it still motivates young learners to remain in school and continue studying the Greek language.

Those who excel -- achieve 100 as final grade -- proudly receive the ***Three Hierarchs Award of Excellence*** from the Archbishop, during a festive ceremonial event held in January, in conjunction with the Greek Letters Celebrations of the Archdiocese.

2) Another major project of the *District Office* that is beneficial to the afternoon schools is the annual ***Staff Development Seminar*** for all the teachers serving in the *District* schools. The *Seminar* is held in November, on Election Day, offering an array of workshops that cover the English and Greek curricula.

Last November (2009), we invited two distinguished university professors from Greece to address Greek teachers. Dr. Georgios Papanastasiou, professor of Linguistics at the *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki* spoke on “*The relation of the Greek language and its script form throughout the centuries.*” And Prof. Eleni Skourtou of the University of the Aegean, in Rhodes, dealt with “*The basic principles of language teaching from the aspect of bilingualism.*”

The 2009 *Seminar* was attended by 287 teachers and administrators of the District’s day and afternoon schools and received very good reviews.

OTHER MEANS OF ASSISTANCE TO THE DISTRICT SCHOOLS

Resource Books and Audio-Visual Materials

The *District Office* selects books and resource materials that are appropriate for reinforcing the teaching of the Greek language and recommends them to the schools. We recently received many new titles, games and CDs and are currently in the process of updating our *Catalog*.

A complete listing of the recommended books and materials exists online, on the *Orthodox Marketplace* website www.orthodoxmarketplace.com.

The Kindergarten Curriculum

The *Curriculum for the Kindergarten* that we published two years ago has been met with great success. It is currently out of print, but it can be downloaded in its entirety from our *Office’s* website at <http://www.education.goarch.org>.

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In closing, I would like to say that we consider it a privilege to be able to assist the parochial schools of the *Direct Archdiocesan District* in educating the young, promising members of our Church.

We organize staff development seminars and workshops to train the teachers; develop and select appropriate materials for the teaching of Greek; develop the *Greek Comprehensive Examination* for the evaluation of students; and represent the parochial **day** schools at the authorities.

Generally speaking, we facilitate the work of the teachers and administrators of the *District* schools and, ultimately, benefit thousands of young students. And this shall be our main goal, the education of the children. The task is enormous and challenging, indeed!



Respectfully submitted:
By Maria Makedon

DISTRICT SCHOOLS STATISTICAL DATA

Schools in the District

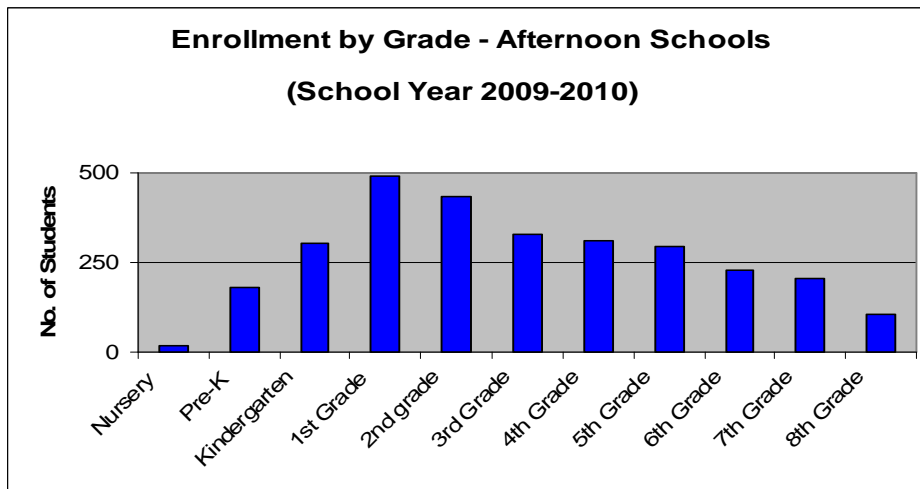
Day Schools	11
Afternoon Schools	46

Teachers Currently Serving

Day Schools (English & Greek curricula)	250
Afternoon Schools	222
Greek Government Appointees	<u>31</u>
TOTAL	503

Student Enrollment – School Year 2009-2010

Day Schools	1,923
Universal Pre-K Classes (A state funded program)	279
Afternoon Schools	<u>3,503</u>
TOTAL	5,705



NOTES:

In the last five years,

- The enrollment of day schools **declined 7%**.
- The enrollment of the afternoon schools **increased 10%**.

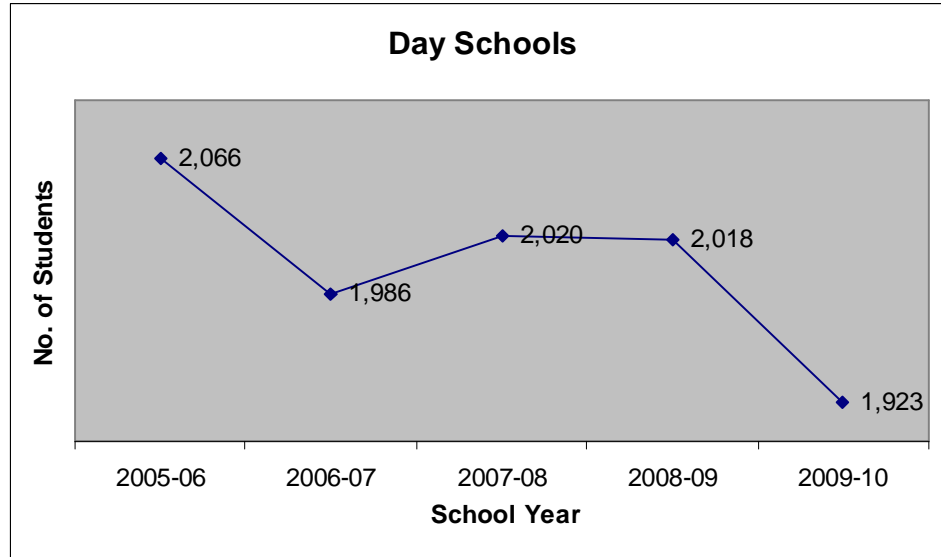
For the 2009-2010 School Year,

- **84%** of day school students and **89%** of afternoon school students attend grades **N-6th**.
- **60%** of day school students and **61%** of afternoon school students attend grades **N-3rd**.

For the 2009-2010 School Year, in the Afternoon Schools (*See Above Chart.*),

- Enrollment **peaks** in the **1st and 2nd grades** (60% of students). It decreases after the 3rd grade.

Enrollment Trends of the Last 5 Years (School Years 2005 – 2010)



Student Percentages by Grade School Year 2009-2010

