



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE

DIRECT ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT

CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY

MARCH 3-4, 2008

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, BRIDGEPORT, CT

THE DISTRICT OFFICE OF EDUCATION REPORT

Mission

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

The District Schools

For the 2007-2008 school year, the enrollment of the **ten** New York City parochial day schools is **2,020** students. In addition, there are approximately 3,300 students attending Greek language classes at the 46 afternoon or Saturday schools of the District.

The parochial day schools of the metropolitan New York area account for one less this year. The "*Soterios Ellenas*" School of the "Koimisis Tis Theotokou" Church, Brooklyn, ceased to exist as a parochial school in 2007. The school was gradually transformed into "*The Hellenic Classical Charter School*." For the current school year, the charter school reported an enrollment of 220 students of whom less than 40 percent are of Greek descent. "*S. Ellenas*" continues to operate as a nursery school.

The District Office of Education: A shift in focus

In 2002, **President George W. Bush** signed into Law the “*No Child Left Behind Act*” that has changed significantly the nation’s education policy. The Law favors “*school choice*” and provides benefits to public as well as to private school students and teachers, including those in **religiously** affiliated schools.

The Greek Orthodox parochial day schools have always been “*schools of choice.*” Thousands of parents – not necessarily of Greek descent – *choose* to send their children to the Greek Orthodox parochial day schools because these schools teach moral values, the universal Greek ideals, customs, and traditions and offer a sense of community.

These church-supported schools – or faith-based schools – have graduated thousands of students who have distinguished themselves as adults in all professions and are members of the local parishes and worthy members of the American society, at large. It is for this reason that our parishes continue to support the day schools despite the financial hardships they encounter.

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

To accomplish this purpose, the *District Office of Education*, acting in unison with the principals of the NYC Greek Orthodox parochial day schools, joined the following educational agencies:

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

Note:

Members of the above mentioned committees are, among others, the following: *Agudath Israel of America; Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York; Catholic School Administrators of NYS; The Archdiocese of New York (Catholic); The Diocese of Brooklyn (Catholic); Islamic Schools Association; Lutheran Schools Association; New York State Council of Catholic School Superintendents; NYS Association of Independent Schools, TheGreekOrthodox Archdiocese, etc.*

The District Director’s Involvement

Since the beginning of the current school year (2007-2008), the director of the *Archdiocesan District Office of Education*, Mrs. Maria Makedon, has participated in the following conferences and meetings representing the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Greek Orthodox parochial day schools:

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.
- 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.
- October 15-16 **The 23rd Annual Conference for Administrators of Independent and Religious Schools:** “*Leading Schools, Developing Minds, and Educating the Future.*” Albany. (Governor Spitzer was the keynote speaker.)
- October 16 Meeting with **Ms. Mary Holmes, Associate for Foreign Language Instruction;** The New York State Education Department, Albany.
- November 8 Meeting of the *Standing Committee of the NYC Religious and Independent Schools* with **Joel I. Klein, Chancellor of Education,** NYC Department of Education, Brooklyn.

2008

- January 16 Meeting of the *Standing Committee of NYC Religious and Independent Schools* with **Karen Zayde-Moncher,** director, Bureau of Nonpublic Schools Reimbursable Services, NYC Department of Education, Brooklyn.
- February 11 Meeting of the *Committee of New York City Religious Schools,* chaired by **Dr. Catherine Hickey,** Secretary of Education, the Archdiocese of New York.

In addition, the *Archdiocesan District Office of Education* held regular meetings with the **principals** of the NYC parochial day schools, in order to discuss matters of mutual concern and to collaborate on projects and events.

Three such meetings have taken place since the beginning of the school year: on **August 30** and **October 23,** 2007 and on **January 18,** 2008. The next principal meeting is scheduled to take place on **March 14,** 2008.

The benefits for the NYC parochial day schools

As a result of the involvement, participation and collaboration of the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* with the above mentioned committees of religious organizations and institutions as well as with the education authorities of the federal government, state and the City of New York, the **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America** has gained recognition and a place in the nonpublic schools community.

Furthermore, united under the umbrella of the Archdiocese, the NYC Greek Orthodox parochial day schools were given **the distinct Code Number 4** by the *NYC Department of Education* and received the following services and materials:

1. Nine of the schools received the language-arts program “**Earobics,**” a software program for the early grades (K-3) worth over **\$200,000**. The schools received **72 computers** with connection to the Web as well as teacher training on the use of the program (school year 2006-07).
2. The *District’s* annual ***Staff-Development Seminar*** for the in-service training of **all** teachers was funded with **\$11,000** by the NYC Department of Education/Bureau of Nonpublic Schools Reimbursable Services (November 2007).
3. The NYC parochial day schools received materials worth over **\$35,000** this year (December 2007).
4. Teachers and administrators serving in the NYC parochial day schools have been taking **courses free of charge**. The courses are given at local colleges and universities, such as the **Adelphi** and **St. John’s University** and lead to master degrees and certification (ongoing).

OTHER IMPORTANT PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Professional Training Offered by St. John’s University Faculty

The District’s annual *Staff-Development Seminar* for the teachers serving in the NYC parochial day and afternoon schools was held under the auspices of **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America**, on **Tuesday, 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 Seminar design was the result of collaboration between the *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* and the **School of Education/Department of Literacy of St. John’s University**. Distinguished educators from **Queens College** and **Manhattanville College** also conducted workshops.

The Greek teachers had the opportunity to attend a workshop on “*How to Incorporate Culture into the Foreign Language Classroom.*” They were also informed about “*The Assessments that follow National Standards in Foreign Language Teaching.*”

Note: This year’s *District’s Staff-Development Seminar* was funded, for the first time, by the *NYC Department of Education/ Bureau of Nonpublic Schools Reimbursable Services*.

The Administrators Conference

A representation of the NYC Greek Orthodox parochial day schools, consisting of seven principals and the director of the *Archdiocesan District Office of Education*, Mrs. Maria Makedon, attended the **23rd Annual Conference for Administrators of Religious and Independent Schools** that was held on **October 15-16, 2008** in Albany. The principals had the opportunity to attend workshops and meet with the State Education Department representatives.

The Conference is organized annually by the *Coalition of Religious Institutions and Independent Schools*, in collaboration with the New York State Education Department. **The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America** is one of its sponsors.

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 *Curriculum* places an emphasis on oral communication and aims to instill in the young learners a sense of pride, love, and respect for the Greek cultural heritage and the Christian Orthodox Faith.

The ***Kindergarten Curriculum*** 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. It is also 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.

Evaluation of Student Learning

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 test that assesses student proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing Modern Greek.

This year’s *Examination* is scheduled for **Tuesday, June 24, 2008**. Under the direction of Mrs. Maria Makedon, the writers are currently working on the creation of the Examination.

The *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek* follows the standards of foreign language examinations of the *New York State Education Department*. Public and parochial school students in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Virginia who successfully pass the *Examination* receive foreign language credits in high schools, colleges and universities.

The Spelling Bee Competition

The *Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education* held the **Annual Spelling Bee** for the students of the NYC parochial day schools on Tuesday, **February 5, 2008**.

Nine students from the area parochial schools participated in the local competition that took place at the Archdiocese headquarters in Manhattan. **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America** congratulated and presented each student with an Award Certificate and a gift card from the bookstore Barnes & Noble.

Tessa Medakovich, an eighth grade student of the *Cathedral School* of Holy Trinity, Manhattan, won the first place. Alexandra Correa, a sixth grader from the “*A. Fantis*” Parochial School of Sts. Constantine & Helen, Brooklyn, was the runner-up. The principal of the Greek-American Institute, Bronx, Mrs. Anne Prokop, pronounced the words.

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 – certificates and diplomas – are available through the *Office’s Catalog* and also on the Web at www.OrthodoxMarketplace.com.



Submitted by
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